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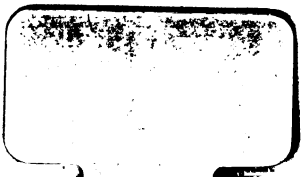

SOTHEBY (Wm.) Oberon, or Huon de Bourdeaux: a mask; and Orestes: a tragedy, FIRST EDITION, 12mo, half calf, *joints cracked*, 7s 6d 1802

OBERON:

OR

HUON de BOURDEAUX:

A MASK.

AND

ORESTES:

A TRAGEDY.

By WILLIAM SOTHEBY, Esq.

F. R. S. & A. S. S.

London: sold by T. CADELL, jun. and W. DAVIES, Strand, and WRIGHT, Piccadilly.

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TO

GEORGE ELLIS, Esq. M. P.

DEAR ELLIS,

Accept the Dedication of the following Mask as a slight memorial of my regard;—that alone would have led me to have gratified myself by this testimony of it. But the dramatised Oberon has a more peculiar claim to your notice.

From your partial commendation of it, in its unfinished manuscript; and (may I not add?) your injunctions, I was induced to reconsider what I had laid aside; and to new mould it by additional Fairy songs and Fairy scenes, into its present form and character.

As a Drama, it might, perhaps, by slight alterations, be easily adapted for representation: but for the closet it is now written: and, whatever may be its reception, the public opinion of your literary taste, can, in no way, be influenced by a trifle of this nature.

I remain, my dear ELLIS,

Most sincerely yours,

WILLIAM SOTHEBY.

Seymour-Street, April 5th. 1802.

ERRATA.

Page 36, line 9, *for* wind'd, &c. *read* wind.
— 15, *for* Noi *read* Nor.
43, — 16, for *opposite* read *opposite.*
51, — 10, *place a period instead of a comma after* ray'd.
72, — 8, for *conculsion* read *conclusion.*
Dedication to Marquis Abercorne, line 9, insert *to* between me *and* add.
141, — 4, *for* soothe *read* sooth.
171, — 3, *insert* Phanor and Guards enter—and *dele* line 5th.
174, — 7, read *Acts not its* own *resolves.*
177, — 2, forged for the *dead* read *deed.*
179, — 18, *place a period after* unseen retire.
185, — 20, after *Exit* insert *Pylades.*
200, — 12, *for* soothe *read* sooth.
203, — 3, *for* loath *read* loth.
217, — 18, add *shewing* the keys.
222, — 2, after *Exit* insert *Phedra.*
236, — 4, add another *off.*

OBERON,

OR

HUON DE BOURDEAUX:

A MASK:

IN FIVE ACTS.

By WILLIAM SOTHEBY, Esq.

F. R. S. & A. S. S.

OBERON,

OR

HUON DE BOURDEAUX:

A MASK—IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Oberon, King of the Fairies.	FAIRIES.
Titania, Queen of the Fairies.	
Ariel, Sylpha, and others.	
Caliph of Bagdad.	MEN.
Horasbec, King of Tartary.	
Almanzor, the Circassian Chief	
Huon de Bourdeaux.	
Eustace.	
Page to the Circassian Chief.	
Rezia, Daughter to the Caliph.	WOMEN.
Almanzaris, the fair Circassian, sister to Almanzor.	
Mirza, Rezia's confidant.	
Salma, mother to Mirza.	
Nadina, attendant on the fair Circassian.	

EMIRS, GUARDS, &c.

The Scene Bagdad, *and an enchanted Wood in its vicinity.*

OBERON,

OR

HUON de BOURDEAUX:

A MASK.

ACT I.

Scene I.—*A desolate wilderness amid mountains overhung with gloomy woods.*

ARIEL:

Ye elfine race! come forth—tis Ariel calls.
Come from yon crags, dank caves, and cheerless woods.
Not such your haunts ere jealous discord shook
The fairy throne—Ah! from that ill-starr'd hour,
Titania, my sweet mistress, and her Lord
Imperial Oberon, have never met,
Save, yearly, on this day, (so fate permits,)
To mourn their doom—Come forth! tis Ariel calls.

(Four groups of Fairies advance slowly to melancholy music.

Ah hapless exiles! grief has strangely dimm'd

Your roseate hue—in what ungenial haunt,
Your destin'd prison, while the year toil'd round,
Has echo murmur'd to your plaint of woe?

1st. FAIRY.

Thro' time untold where lurk'd the toad
Clos'd in the cold rock's central womb,
I drove him from his lone abode,
And there I pin'd in sunless gloom,
Doom'd o'er the dreams of bliss to weep,
When cradling lilies rock'd my sleep.

2nd FAIRY.

I crept beneath the thorny shade
Where snakes had cast their coily sloughs,
There, forc'd by fate, I wreath'd my braid
With berries pluck'd from night-shade boughs:
And as the rude weed swell'd my hand,
I sigh'd for flow'rs of fairy land—

3rd FAIRY.

From yon scath'd oak, at twilight grey,
When the horn'd owlet left her young,

I scar'd her moon-ey'd brood away,
As on their nest my limbs I flung:
And there I thought on fairy bow'rs,
And saddened o'er remembered hours.

4th FAIRY.

Where mortal thing might never breathe,
While loitering ice-drops, one by one,
Burst on the fretted flints beneath,
And turn'd each earthly form to stone,
I wept for fairy fountains clear,
And told each ice-drop with a tear.

CHORUS.

Now, foreboding woe to come,
Spirit, we dread to hear our doom—

1st FAIRY.

Ah when shall we revisit fairy land,
And those its pleasant seats, by brook, and fount,
Groves that wept balsam, and th'unfading bow'rs
Of laurel, lightning proof?—

ARIEL.

Ah! luckless Fays!

Here, in dire exile, with your Lords, oath-bound,
Long must ye droop in these ungenial shades
Where Oberon mourns, begirt with harts and hinds,
Foxes, and loathsome things, and beasts of the wild.
Forms human once, but by his touch transformed
To brutal. Such their nature, that forswore
Vows heard by heav'n, of love and wedded faith.
Thus they in shape of beast their penance work,
And bound with us, here wait alike their doom,
On man's frail race dependant—

FAIRY.

Gentle Ariel!

Is there no hope?

ARIEL.

None, till love crown a pair
Such as time ne'er has seen, this side the moon—

FAIRY.

How gifted?

ARIEL.

With pure faith that knows not change;
With constancy defying every proof,
Torture, and imminent death, and syren smiles
Of amorous blandishment. This wondrous pair,
Earth-born, alone can loose the solemn vow
That Oberon breath'd: no more, (till such be found)
To sport in fairy land, or on his throne
Replace his banish'd bride.

(SYLPHA *descends disguised like an African boy, bearing a magic mirror.*

lo! Sylpha speeds
Before the wind. Say, Spirit, has success
Smil'd on thy service?

SYLPHA.

Such as o'erpast hope—
Take back th'enchanted mirror, precious proof
Of Oberon's truft in me—

ARIEL.

Relate what past,

That I, erewhile, may sooth the fairy king,
With gleam of dawning bliss—

SYLPHA.

I, as enjoyn'd,
In likeness of a slave of Afric's soil,
Went, where enthron'd mid Peers and Paladins,
Sat Charlemaine in proud imperial state.
It was a solemn feast-day, ushered in
With splendid pomp of tilt and tournament.
Young Huon's maiden lance had all unhors'd;
And his the envy'd prize: a scarf gold-purfled
Wrought by a royal virgin. At my entrance
The heralds' trumpets preluded the banquet—
I sounded my wreath'd conch, and all was still.
The knights around me throng'd—"behold" (I said)
"Brave Paladins! a maid, whose peerless charms
"Shall fire the pride and flower of Chivalry
"To deeds that trance the hearer"—at the word
I held the mirror up. There Rezia smil'd

Sweet as the moon that o'er the summer lake
Hangs gazing on her image—

ARIEL.

how look'd Huon?

SYLPHA.

Like one, whose every sense dissolved in bliss,
First thrills with love's delicious witchery—

ARIEL.

'Twas bravely done, sweet spirit—

SYLPHA.

"lo! (I said)
"The wonder of the east, proud Bagdad's heiress;
"Win, wed her, rescued from Horasbec's arms,
"The hateful Tartar king, her plighted Lord—
Swift at the mention of the Tartar king
Who slew young Huon's sire, "be mine (he cried)
"The perilous adventure"—on I steer'd
His course to Palestine: and lonely left him
A wearied stranger, near the woodman's cave—

SONG.

While the charm'd Steersman idly stood,
All day before the prow I flew;
I beckon'd to the following flood,
And to my nod the vessel drew.

At dead of night when died the wind
And loosely flap'd the loitering sail,
I spread my viewless plumes behind,
And as I wav'd them, woke the gale.

And still I tun'd my melody:
While floating dolphins gambold round,
And sea-maids leap'd to catch the sound
That hush'd the storm with lullaby—

ARIEL.

Spirit! time speeds his flight, and ere again
The slope sun sinks his car in floods of gold,
The Tartar's nuptial kiss, if Huon fail,

Seals Rezia's death—haste to the woodman's cave.
By magic sights, and songs whose potency
Draws down the listning planets from their spheres,
Charm Huon forth—on him our doom depends.

SYLPHA.

'Tis done—I vanish from thy sight
On pinion that outstrips the light——(*Flies away.*)

ARIEL (*to the other Fairies.*)

Ye! when the star of eve peers o'er yon cliff,
Here greet your sov'reigns—hence—away—away
(*Exeunt Fairies.*

SCENE changes to another part of the forest—on one side, amid the rocks, a cave illumined by a sparkling fire— Huon *enters during a violent storm—*

HUON.

'Tis pathless all—no trace of human foot.
Sure here at noon-day, mid such solitudes
The hoary woodman, tenant of the soil,
Trusts not his step. Ill shall it fare with me

An unknown wanderer mid these stranger wilds—
Thick drives the pitiless storm. Beneath this rock,
O'er which the Cedar spreads his branching arms
Boldly luxuriant, will I rest awhile
Till the dark clouds sweep by—ha! from yon cave
A light bursts forth with hospitable blaze—
This way it guides my step *(goes to the cave)*
—the up-pil'd heap
Burns cheerful, and the fire brisk-crackling, fann'd
By the keen gale, strikes jocund on the ear.
Methought I heard a voice

EUSTACE *(behind the scenes.)*

Halt!

HUON.

Ha! what voice
Thunders thus fiercely?

EUSTACE *(entering.)*

Halt!

HUON.

Say, who art thou,

Of savage semblance, mask'd in garb uncouth?
Thy rude exterior, whosoe'er thou art,
Marks thee no sojourner in haunts of men,
And if thy manners answer to thy garb,
Rude shall my welcome prove.

EUSTACE.

Oh native speech!
Sweet melody! for many a year unheard!
Oh let me hear once more the enchanting sound
That vibrates on my soul!

HUON.

Speak; who art thou,
That 'mid these rocks—

EUSTACE.

Sir, welcome to my cell!
Suspect me not: again I bid you welcome.—
Knight! follow me.

HUON.

Thy speech and garb agree not!
Thus rude, yet strangely courteous!

EUSTACE.

Trust me, sir,
This beard, that darkly bristles on my breast,
These skins of mountain beasts, thus coarsely patch'd,
That flap on my bare shanks, may hide a heart
Kind as the worshipper of courts, who glitters
In fashion's bravery—leave this outward cave—
The storm that bows the forest with its blast,
Rings thro' the crags, and from yon untrimm'd shoots
That dangle o'er the yawning arch above,
Thick drops the rain.

HUON;

Say, whither would'st thou lead me?

EUSTACE.

Here, to my inner cave—these unknown rocks,
Gigantic columns rear'd by Nature's hand,
Lead to my palace. These pil'd trunks that blaze
Before its entrance, are the centinels
That from my haunt drive back the prowling beasts:
Whose nightly howl, familiar to these deserts,

Preludes my sleep. My garb I grant is rough;
Yet, Knight, suspect me not—lo! at your feet
I lay my knotted mace. Now, follow me,
And fear not.

HUON.

Fear! thou art a man—I fear not.
Take up thy club, and lead me where thou wilt.

(SCENE changes to the inner cave.

EUSTACE.

How like you, Sir, my palace, far more priz'd
By me than golden roofs. Here Peace resides.
All that I have is yours. Feed on this honey
Hiv'd by the mountain swarms in hollow oaks.
I know their summer flights in flowery glades,
Aye, and their wintery stations. Take these figs,
And these ripe dates—nay, freely take, my palm trees
Would never fail me, tho' a host of strangers
O'erflow'd my cave.

HUON.

Kind host! these savage fruits
Have exquisite flavor.

EUSTACE.

Cull my choicest grapes:
These, freshly pluck'd, these raisins dry'd in the sun;
Such vines, if by our Gascon peasants train'd,
And duly trodden out in jocund season,
Would gush with liquor that might rouse a dance
To fancy'd minstrels—all I have is yours,
Nor ask I in return ought but the sound
Of my lov'd native land.

HUON.

Yet more, my thanks:
And, if this gold—

EUSTACE.

Mines would not purchase you
The flint beneath your foot. Now lay you down
Before my hearth. Fir, larch, and unctuous pine
Gay-sparkling, breathe around delicious odors—

Smooth is this couch of reeds, with moss o'erstrown:
The wild flow'r, and crush'd thyme beneath you spread,
Shall pillow you on perfume.

HUON.

Courteous host,
My limbs require repose—

EUSTACE.

Yet, let me first
Unyoke this pond'rous harness from your back.
Tho' long unus'd, yet still I know to handle
These war accoutrements. So we unlink
These iron joints. There hang your breast-plate, here
Your greaves and shield. By heav'n! I little thought
That the old office thus had warm'd my blood:
But as I loos'd the braces of your helm,
The sound of the steel clasp, and plated thong
Rung a shrill note that rous'd a warrior's ear—

HUON.

A warrior's! *(Huon takes off his helmet.)*

EUSTACE.

Heav'n! how like! yes, limb for limb.
Eye, forehead, mouth, and hair.

HUON.

Like whom?

EUSTACE.

Oh pardon!
A dream of better days, most sweet yet painful,
Forces these gushing tears. Say? what your name?

HUON.

Huon, the son of Segwin, Duke of Guyenne.

EUSTACE.

My heart deceived me not. Oh welcome, welcome;
Son of my honor'd Lord—Youth, oft these hands
Have dandled you in childhood: I have humm'd
Old Gascon carols to your cradled sleep.
Forgive my freedom, Sir, joy must have vent:
And joy and I, aye, since my master perish'd,
Have still been strangers. Deign to look on Eustace.

HUON.

My father's trusty Squire!

EUSTACE.

I shar'd his woe,
When in lone pilgrimage on Syria's soil
Wild Arabs seiz'd us: I rush'd in to save him,
When, while the Christian Knight refus'd to bend
His knee at Mahmoud's name, Horasbec's dagger
Smote him unarm'd. Me back the Tartar sent
To spread the tale, and his defiance bear
To threaten'd Christendom. Since then, self-bound
In voluntary penance, mid these rocks
My lonely life has past. Adventurous youth!
What urg'd you to these wilds?

HUON.

I haste to Bagdad,
Avenger of my sire, to dare Horasbec
To mortal fight; and rescue from his arms
The Sultan's beauteous daughter. Guide my steps.
Huon is not ungrateful. But, my friend,

If age has ic'd the current of your blood,
Reckless I go.

EUSTACE.

You call me from the grave.
You fill me with new life. No other guide
But Eustace shall attend on Segwin's son.
With you I live or die. (*soft music heard.*)

HUON.

Heard you the strain
That swells and dies away at intervals?
Methinks aerial minstrels wake the lute
With fairy touch, attun'd to sweeter sounds
Than Zephyr whispers o'er the vernal reeds.

SONG by an invisible Fairy—during the Song aerial figures of Huon *and* Rezia *are seen. The Princess supplicating his aid.*

Knight! by Regia's magic glance
That steeps each sense in amorous trance,

Come to my call, make no delay.
To Bagdad speed thy destin'd way—

Hark! while I weave thy victor braid,
A father's spirit—"Vengeance," cries,
And love, that form'd th'enchanting maid,
Soft-whispers, "win the peerless prize!"

Led on by Glory, Vengeance, Love,
Dauntless the dread adventure prove—
Haste, Huon, haste! make no delay.
Come forth! I fly before thy way—

(at the conclusion of the Song the magic visions vanish.)

HUON.

Spirit of air! lead on—be thou my guide!
Tho' death with lifted dart before me stood,
Huon would dauntless follow, lo! I come.

(Exeunt.

End of ACT 1st.

ACT II.

Almanzor's Palace at Bagdad.

ALMANZOR—ALMANZARIS.

ALMANZARIS.

Not mine alone the wish. This day, Horasbec
Calls you to join the chase. All Bagdad throngs
To view the passing show.

ALMANZOR.

These pomps of peace
Suit not a warrior's spirit.

ALMANZARIS.

Why Almanzor
That frown of discontent, when fortune seems
To wait on every wish?

ALMANZOR.

Ah what avails
This arm resistless, what my charmed life

That mocks the force of weapons forg'd by man,
Since, by dire vows compell'd, my conquest crowns
Horasbec's triumph? Ah! might Rezia chuse
A warrior worthy of her charms, Almanzor
Had never brooded o'er successless love,
Nor curst malignant fate. *(Horasbec enters.)*

ALMANZARIS.

Horasbec comes.

HORASBEC.

Almanzor, haste! fair Rezia joins the chase.
Ne'er have her charms adorn'd the festive train
That sought her smile. But on this blissful day
Fore-runner of our nuptials, Rezia's self
Bright as the sun that glads the expecting world,
Comes forth to grace the sports. Almanzor, haste!
The pomp but waits your presence—

ALMANZOR.

Yes—Almanzor
Once more will swell thy triumph—Come, fair sister!

(Exeunt omnes.

SCENE changes to Rezia's *apartment.*

SALMA—MIRZA.

SALMA.

A dream so work her fancy! nay, you dream—

MIRZA.

Night after night the visionary form
Smiles on her sleep.

SALMA.

It passes all belief—

MIRZA.

And yet sweet Rezia dotes upon the shade.
What but the hope to meet th' expected knight
Now leads her to the chase? else, never Rezia
Had grac'd Horasbec's pomp.

SALMA.

Oh hapless maid

MIRZA.

Go then, dear mother, on this festive day,
Strangers, nay Christians, all unquestion'd flock
To joyful Bagdad. On the bridge, where Tygris

Flows by your cottage-garden, take your stand:
And, if a knight, such as the vision pictur'd,
Draw near, beneath your roof with kindly greeting
Welcome the stranger—hence—*(Salma departs)*—the
Princess comes.

(Rezia *enters with a numerous train magnificently attired for the chase.*

MIRZA.

Sweet Mistress!

REZIA *(to her train.)*

Stand apart—speak faithful Mirza!
Relieve my throbbing heart.

MIRZA.

Ah! how shall Mirza
Give answer?

REZIA.

Has no stranger Knight appear'd?

MIRZA.

Still have I watch'd in vain—my stand o'erlook'd

The passing croud—alas! no stranger knight
There met my view.

REZIA.

Yet, yet his arm shall save me—
Love! if delusive phantoms round me play,
Still as thy magic day-dreams dye away,
In visions of the night their trace restore!
Ah'! in that dream may death my eyelids close!
So shall a smile on my pale lip repose,
And my sooth'd spirit rest, where peace dwells ever more. *(Exeunt* Rezia *and her train.*

SCENE changes to a wild Desart near the enchanted Wood.

HUON *and* EUSTACE.

HUON.

I tell thee Eustace 'twas no faithless vision—
Here, what I feel is truth—if false that shape,
Life is itself a shadow—

EUSTACE.

Sir, the form

Was exquisitely touched—yet after all
Perchance, mere fancy's work—the o'er-heated brain
Has wond'rous faculties to shape at will
Its own creation—in my rocky cave,
When o'er the dying embers I have mus'd
On battles of my youth, scenes long time past,
Yet livelier far than memory e'er pourtray'd,
Glow'd in my vision—these old scars have bled
Fresh as when first the crooked scymitar
Sever'd my helm; and my lone couch has rung
To many a midnight larum—yet—my lord!
By heav'n! he hears me not——

HUON.

That smile again!
Oh let my lip once more awake the blush
That glow'd beneath my kiss! Oh once again
Imbibe the balmy breath whose fragrance pour'd
The sweets of paradise!—

EUSTACE.

His hue is chang'd—
I like it not—

HUON.

They shall not force thee from me—
My limbs are planet-struck.

EUSTACE.

Rouse, rouse you, Sir;
Some hag more horrid than the night-mare, rides
On your day-visions—I have groan'd beneath
The lumpish burthen—I have seen the fiend
With her squab brood of goblins and squint demons,
At midnight, when late feasts like lead opprest me:
But in the sun-shine, never—rouse, Sir Knight!
Haste, haste to Bagdad—there the beauteous maid
Claims her deliverer—

HUON.

There these arms shall clasp her.
When, when shall we arrive?

EUSTACE.

If fortune smile,
And the fierce Arab hordes cross not our course,
Ere twice the day-light dies, you reach the goal—
But, Sir, there is a path amid the wood,

Fenc'd by yon firs, that in two hours, 'tis said,
Leads straight to Bagdad—

HUON.

That way Huon hastes—
Lead on—

EUSTACE.

Not threats, nor bribes shall e'er induce me—
'Tis haunted, Sir—

HUON.

Nay—never fear.

EUSTACE.

Not fear!
'Tis haunted, Sir, I say—

HUON.

I say, lead on—

EUSTACE.

Yes, you may smile, fair youth, but once entangled
You'll never hear the sound of mirth again.
Thousands have enter'd—none have e'er returned—
A little further this way, and I'll whisper

Strange secrets in your ear—a tiny demon,
None of your common ghosts that stalk by night,
And vanish at the dawn, there holds his court—
A little further this way—do not smile—
'Tis a malicious spirit, who in sport,
Turns with a touch these dainty forms of ours,
To shape of beasts—heard you yon hideous roar?
Fly, fly the place—

HUON.

Talk not of goblins, Eustace,
And fears of visionary phantoms born.
I haste to Bagdad—

EUSTACE.

Here! behold your guide.
I dread not flesh and blood—but Sir, I own,
This fiend unmans me—sword and shield avail not.
'Gainst a malicious foe, that show'rs at will
Invisible blows—

HUON.

Peace—I will hear no more—

The way that leads to Bagdad, Huon hastes—
Thou to thy cave—farewell.

EUSTACE.

Not that—not that—
Come fiend, come goblin, while my blood is warm,
Old Eustace never will desert his Lord—

(Exeunt.

ARIEL *and* FAIRIES *enter.*

ARIEL, *sings.*

Where maze in maze meand'ring round
The leafy labyrinth shades the ground,
Haste, and as the wanderers stray,
Lure to yon central spot their way.

Thou, like the fire that nightly flies,
When o'er the marsh blue mists arise,
On wings of gleaming vapour ride,
Before them flash, and onward glide.

Thou, earth-fixt on the hillock damp
Trim with green flame the glow-worm lamp,
That spots with light the gloomy shade,
And beams an emerald on the glade.

Thou, like the watch-tow'r's distant light
That stars the promontory's height,
And streaming o'er the darksome tides,
The storm-tost wreck to anchor guides,
Flame o'er yon pine that tops the grove,
And blaze a beacon from above.

(Fairies exeunt.

SCENE changes to a different part of the forest.

HUON *and* EUSTACE *enter.*

HUON.

'Tis vanish'd—yet methought a beck'ning flame
Still danc'd before me—if these shades be haunted,
Here dwells the enchanter, in this central spot,
Where the wild mazes meet—

EUSTACE.

Not that way, Sir,
Not for the world—your floating locks of gold
Will grieve, when chang'd to bristly hairs, they shag
Some antler'd brow—I speak not of my beauty;
Yet I had rather lay me in the grave
Such as my mother bore me, than go down
Deck'd with a cloven hoof.

(Music is heard, and the scenes described in Huon's *speech are gradually displayed.)*

What heav'nly strains
Draw my charm'd spirit—lo! soft gleams of light
Illume the grove, and pour their roseate tints,
Like clouds, that purpling o'er the summer sky,
Play in the setting sun-beams—light before me,
A castle floats in air; where, as inlaid
By cunning skill of fairy architect,
Gems, brilliant as heavn's bow, with changeful hues
Flame on the battlements.

(The portals of the castle open, and Oberon, *like a beautiful boy, with a lily wand in his hand, advances in a car drawn by lions.)*

EUSTACE.

'Tis he!—the demon—

Fly, fly, my lord—

HUON.

Behold the God of love!

EUSTACE.

'Tis the deceitful fiend—

OBERON.

Stay, Huon, stay.

Thy happiness thou fliest—

HUON.

How sweet his voice!

EUSTACE.

More fell than thunder when it rives a rock—

Youth! I will force you from the spot.

OBERON.

Oh! stay—

HUON.

Loose me—if fiends have shap'd that beauteous form,
I will not fly—unhand me—

OBERON.

Rash old man!
Yet not the sunshine purer than thy soul—
Or thou had'st felt my vengeance—with soft breath
Thus I chastive thy folly. (Oberon *gently blows his horn, and* Eustace *swoons at his feet.*
Why thus mute
Huon of Bourdeaux? speak, and dread me not—

HUON.

Why should I fear? who art thou? speak thy will—

OBERON.

I am the monarch of the Fairy realm—
Huon of Bourdeaux hear!—I long have lov'd thee,
Not like weak mortals with capricious fondness,
As fancy wavers, but that in thy soul
I trac'd each kindly seed of opening virtue.
Manhood matures the fruit, that in thy spring

Bloom'd with delightful promise. I will aid thee.

HUON.

Hail! Fairy Monarch!

OBERON.

Interrupt me not.

Bow down—around thy neck I chain this horn:
How seeming worthless! yet the globe itself
Chang'd to a diamond sphere, would fail to purchase
This matchless gift. Soft wind'd along its folds
Low melodies, then breathless at thy feet,
Fierce kings, and hosts in arms that sought thy life,
Shall swoon in death-like trance—if loudly rung,
At once I stand before thee, tho' the earth
Roll'd its vast orb between us—yet—beware—
Nor waste on worthless cause that solemn call—
That solemn call once heard, the o'erstrain'd bugle
Flies back to fairy land—

EUSTACE *(slowly recovering)*

Aye, aye—I said it—
'Tis the sly demon—you'll ne'er smile again—

My brain swims, and the forest dances round.

OBERON—*to Eustace, presenting to him a golden goblet, filled with wine.*

Take this o'erflowing bowl—its potent juice
Shall renovate thy frame—and swell each vein
With youth's gay dancing blood—

HUON—*to Eustace.*

Nay, fear not, Eustace!

EUSTACE.

Look, Sir, 'tis colour'd with the Gascon grape,
Red as a ruby—o'er the brim it bubbles—(*he drinks.*)
How! it o'erflows again: full as at first—
I left no drop: but as I drain'd the bowl
I saw these eyes reflected in its hollow
Beam in bright gold—(*to* Oberon)—low at thy feet I kneel,
God of the golden bowl.

OBERON.

Huon, receive it.
The gold by fairy graver quaintly chas'd,

Makes not its value: nor the wine that pour'd
Thro' aged veins the jocund blood of youth:
But its instinctive quality that proves
The nature of the heart—if pure the lip
That tastes the bowl, the liquor self-supply'd,
Streams without fail: if base, th' indignant bubbles
Sink self-absorb'd, and the void goblet turn'd
To fiery metal, brands the man of guilt.
Take it—and now farewell! to Bagdad haste—
There at the nuptial feast claim thou the bride.
Till then, in fearless trust repose on me.
Behold thy path—

HUON.

Oh how shall Huon mark
His boundless gratitude?

OBERON.

By faith, by virtue—
Be but the current of thy future life
Pure as its source, my favour is repay'd
A thousand fold—remember, man is frail,
Nor spurn the counsel of thy fairy friend—

Oh think there are in nature secret tyes
By man unseen, that in the chain of being
Ascending and descending, link by link,
Join creatures seeming opposite; farewell—
Huon, perhaps the bliss of Oberon
Depends on thee—be virtuous and succeed—

*(*OBERON *ascends his Car, and departs—the enchanted Castle vanishes.*

(A loud roar, and shriek are heard.)

EUSTACE.

Hark—'tis the lion's roar—

HUON.

I hear a shriek
Of thrilling agony—some hapless wanderer
Seiz'd by the prowling beasts that haunt these woods
Claims our assistance—follow me—

EUSTACE.

Lead on.

Exeunt.

HORASBEC—*(behind the scenes.)*

Help, or I'm dead—

EUSTACE—*(behind the scenes.)*

Strike him once more, my lord.

Back—or the beast will crush you in his fall.

(They enter supporting Horasbec.

HUON—*(to Horasbec.)*

Lean on us, Sir,—nay quicken not your pace.

The lion is no more.

EUSTACE.

Here, gently seat him

On this soft mound of moss—nay, fear not, Sir,

Your steed half-eaten welters in his blood:

He will not rece again; but you breathe well:

And, but in apprehension, free from wound—

(To Huon)—When the fierce lion darting on your blade,

Yawn'd o'er you with his wide sepulchral jaws,

I little thought that my old cedar bough,

Tho' well I knew its worth, had at one swing,

Crack'd his rock scull—

HUON.

Behold, the mantling colour
Relumes his cheek—

EUSTACE.

Let us complete the cure—
Give him the bowl—there's virtue in each drop—*(To Horasbec.)*
Sir, were you crookt, on crutches, sip this juice,
You'd fling your props away, and bound in air,
As when your mistress beckon'd to the ball
In life's brisk dancing prime.

HORASBEC—*(throwing the bowl away.)*

Thou fiend of hell!
It burns like glowing metal—curses on it—

EUSTACE.

Guilt, by this light—

HORASBEC—*(aside)*

How can I scape these sorcerers?

HUON—*(advancing solemnly towards him)*

Pagan! behold this sword I lift to heaven—

'Twas not my arm: no, 'twas the Christian God
That sav'd thy life—touch this—(*his sword*)—and hail
his name.

HORASBEC—(*suddenly springing up, and running away.*)
Curse on thy faith and thee, thou Christian dog!

HUON.

Blasphemer! fly my vengeance—

EUSTACE.

Heed him not.
Most nimbly, ostrich like, he sweeps the plain—
'Tis vain to follow him—look, in his flight
The wretch has dropp'd his turban, starr'd with gems.
A man of note indeed, but base of heart—
I will not touch them—

HUON.

Eustace, let us forth—
That prospect fires my soul—along yon champaign
That like a sea of verdure spreads before us,
Swift Tygris, and Euphrates mix their streams—
And thickly girt with tow'r and battlement,

Tall palaces, and swelling cupolas,
Minarets and mosques, that catch the sun's low beams,
Imperial Bagdad beckons me—come forth—
Success or death there ends my bold emprize.

Exeunt.

SCENE changes to Oberon's Haunt in the enchanted Forest.

ARIEL *and* FAIRIES *enter.*

ARIEL.

Haste, Spirits! haste! o'er yonder snow-wreath'd cliff,
Lo! Hesper clearly shines. Yet ah! the moon
Once the bright regent of our revelries,
Veils her fair orb, as if the pensive planet
Were darken'd by our grief. 'Tis now the time—
Mark'd you the warning meteor? Fays! they come—
Bow down—ere yon wing'd cars, that waft our lords,

(*Oberon, Titania, from opposite quarters, meet in their aerial cars.*)

Borne on the viewless winds, from climes oppos'd,
Meet in mid air, low breathe in plaintive tune

Soft sounds, if plaintive tune may sooth their woe.

FAIRIES.

If ever sooth'd by melody,
Attemper'd to the touch of fairy lute,
The voice of woe was mute,
Sweet Echo! join our minstrelsy!
And ere the dying cadence close,
Oh charm the troubled spirit to repose!

OBERON.

Titania! once again, in these sad haunts,
On this ill-omend day—

TITANIA.

Oh pardon me!
That thus I interrupt thee—do not breathe
Words of harsh import—as I floated by,
Each magic note of elfine melody
Once heard delightful, seem'd alas! to pour
Reproaches on me.

ARIEL.

Say not so, sweet mistress!

TITANIA.

Oh Oberon! if penitence can move;
If to have liv'd in exile, far from thee,
In climes, where each dull season wears alike
The winter's hue; if still, where e'er I pin'd
In restless solitude, around me hovered
The spirit of departed joy - - - if these
Can move thee; while I bathe thy feet in tears,
Thou wilt not turn relentless.

OBERON.

Rise, Titania!
Thou hast not wept unpity'd—ah! might tears
Streaming in sympathy with thine, efface
Oaths register'd in heav'n, thou ne'er hadst sought
Forgiveness at my feet, nor I had mourn'd
My ineffectual pow'r. Yet rise, despair not—
If faith a dwelling hold in youthful hearts,
Untainted with the commerce of the world,
Once more we may be blest—

TITANIA.

What hope? say—

OBERON.

Ariel.

Hold up that magic mirror—lo! that form—
'Tis Rezia, Bagdad's heiress—look again—
'Tis Huon, Duke of Guyenne—a peerless pair.
These, by my potent art, in dreams of bliss
Each to the other bound, alone can loose
The oath I rashly swore.

TITANIA.

A ray of hope
Darts thro' my grief—give me the maid in charge.
With every hair that waves on Huon's head,
The God of Love shall link a golden chain
That fetters heart to heart.

OBERON.

Vain here thy pow'r.
Oh leave her to the fascinating dream.
Nature, more strong than magic, fans the flame,

When love first wakes to bliss a virgin heart.
Huon is virtuous—but I fear—

TITANIA.

Oh speak!
Why that portentous silence?

OBERON.

Man is frail:
These are of earth. Our pow'rs are limited:
We cannot change the heart; there man alone
Is in himself supreme. At will we lavish
Crowns, riches, charms that turn grey beards to dotage:
But the fixt bent and nature of the heart
Rendering each gift a blessing or a curse
Are not at our disposal. If these fail,
Truth never more shall fix her seal on brow
Of mortal mold. Be but their faith unchang'd,
When next we meet we reign in fairy land.
Farewell! tho' on a vision of a dream
Hope fondly rest, (*to the attendant Fairies*)—Ye! hail
her golden beam.

*(*OBERON *and* TITANIA *ascend, and are borne away in their aerial cars.*

CHORUS of FAIRIES.

Hail golden Hope—we heard the King,
And shall again on boundless wing,
At will our revelry renew,
And pledg'd in acorn bowls, sip heav'n's ambrosial dew.

1st. FAIRY—*Solo.*

On earth when Eve's pale twilight gleams,
I, on the gossamer with viewless pace,
The moon will challenge to the race:
And laugh to see her swiftest beams
Silvering the web that dances in the wind,
Glide, as I reach the goal, a fairy's length behind.

2nd. FAIRY—*Solo.*

I, o'er the sea my course will take,
And catch with unwet feet the lessning sail
That vanishes before the gale—
And sliding in its level wake,

Number the sparkles of the foamy tide,
That, glittering o'er the prow, stream radiance far and wide.

3rd FAIRY—*Solo.*

I, thro' the path of air will soar,
And when the summer meteor flames afar,
Swifter than glance of shooting star,
Will flash its transient course before:
While scatter'd from my wings in dew-drops bright
The rain-bow's lunar arch o'er-canopy's my flight.

4th FAIRY—*Solo.*

I, on the sun's slope beam will ride,
And as it sinks th' atlantic wave beneath,
From clouds of roseate lustre wreathe
My robes of light, by fancy dy'd:
Fringe with etherial braid my new-fledg'd wing,
Then spread its feathery pomp, and fan the fairy king.

CHORUS.

Hail golden hope! we heard the king,
And shall again on boundless wing,

At will our revelry renew,
And pledg'd in acorn bowls, sip heav'n's ambrosial dew.

End of ACT 2nd.

ACT III.

(Lamp-light.) The bridge over the Tygris—The outside of Salma's *cot, in the suburbs of Bagdad.*

ARIEL *and* FAIRIES *enter, with baskets of fruit.*

ARIEL.

Spirits! here Huon comes—here rests at night
In Salma's straw-thatch'd cot—breathe o'er your fruits
Pure fragrance from the bow'rs of fairy land—
So deck her board—then in rich trappings grac'd
Caparison the barb, and from the woof
Of elfine looms, bring Huon's robe of state,
Fit robe for royal guest at bridal feasts.

CHORUS *of* FAIRIES.

We breathe, and o'er these fruits expand
Fragrance stol'n from fairy land.

Solo—1st. FAIRY.

These grapes, where liquid rubies glow,
And amethysts of purple hue,
To autumn suns no color owe:
Beneath the fairy glance they grew.
I saw them linger in the barren shade,
And on their clust'ring orbs new life and lustre ray'd,

Solo—2nd. FAIRY.

And o'er this peach the down I spread
From fleeces spun in fairy loom,
And o'er the plumb its azure shed
Dropt from the dust that shades my plume,
That when young Zephyr woo'd me to his bow'r,
Stream'd from my ruffled wing, and fell in feathery show'r.

CHORUS.

We breathe, and o'er these fruits expand
Fragrance stol'n from fairy land.

(Fairies go into Salma's cot.

SALMA *enters.*

It was the Tartar king—swift from my sight
He vanish'd like a spectre—yet I knew him.
And had not this good crutch thus propt my limbs,
Here had I fall'n, without a friend to aid,
So rudely he brush'd by me—well—'tis late—
I'll to my cot—no stranger youth this night
Will cross my threshold—*(as* Salma *is going to her cot,*
Huon *and* Eustace *enter from a different part.)*

EUSTACE.

Welcome, Knight! to Bagdad!
Heav'n knows what other voice shall bid you welcome!
(*seeing* Salma)—Ha! 'tis a female—not in form inviting:
Yet will I greet the dame with courteous speech.
Most gracious lady!

SALMA.

Speak you, Sir, to me?

EUSTACE.

I see none but yourself, and your sweet shadow
Reflected by the lamp-light—pity us,
Fair lady! here, unknowing, and unknown,
We roam.

SALMA.

A civil gentleman, forsooth—
Yet—by his garb, no courtier. Sir, what want you?

HUON.

We are benighted strangers, tir'd with travel—

SALMA.

How! strangers! ah, perchance, the expected knight!
Come to my cot: and on the morrow seek
More suited quarters—

HUON.

None more grateful, trust me,
Than yours so kindly offer'd. 'Tis the welcome,
And not the cost that makes the cheerful guest.

SALMA—(*seating them in her cot.*)

What tempting fruit! no doubt my Mirza's gift—
Take them—their very fragrance feasts the sense—
Nay—take them—be at home: 'tis but a cottage,
Yet dear to Salma. Here I live unvext.
Day after day glides o'er me, while I hum
Tunes of my youth. Aye, Sirs, while here I press
My straw with brow unruffled, many a heart
Sighs beneath golden roofs.

EUSTACE—(*aside.*)

She's not mistaken.

SALMA.

I guess what brings you hither—here you swarm,
All for one object. What a hive of strangers!
The caravans to Mecca are less crowded.
All for the morrow's feast—good fortune guides you.
Our Sultan's daughter weds: to-morrow weds.
(*aside*)—He seems most strangely mov'd.—(*To Huon*)
I like your looks,
Such looks hide no false heart—discreet I'll warrant.

HÜON.

Nay—tell me all—

EUSTACE—(*aside.*)

Sir, interrupt her not—

SALMA.

I promis'd not to tell: never reveal it.
The princess loathes the man. She'd rather clasp
A dragon, than the Tartar, in her arms.

HÜON.

Why weds she whom she loathes?

SALMA.

The Tartar Conqueror
O'er-ran our realm, and as the price of peace,
Demanded Rezia's hand. Who could resist?
With fierce Homsbec march'd Circassia's Prince
Of giant strength and size: throughout the East
Fam'd for his beauteous sister; and more fam'd
For his enchanted bracelet. He, who wears it,
Conquers without a blow. 'Tis strange, you say:

Yet I have stranger news—guess why fair Rezia
Detests this king—

HUON.

Oh say—

SALMA.

She dies—for love—

HUON.

For love—of whom?

SALMA.

Alas! she ne'er beheld him,
Save in a dream—

HUON *and* EUSTACE.

A dream! a dream!

SALMA.

Nay, hear it.
That fierce Horasbec follow'd her, on sudden
Chang'd to a roe, o'er dreary solitudes:
And when his hand was stretch'd, in act to seize her,
At once within a car by lions drawn
A beauteous boy appear'd—at sight of him

The Tartar monarch fled—On drove the boy,
And by a touch of his rais'd lily-wand
Restor'd our Rezia to her native charms—
Then—

HUON.

A fair boy! by lions drawn!

EUSTACE.

By lions!

SALMA.

He bad her mount the car, where by his side
A lovely stranger sat, with golden locks,
And eye—like yours—blue as the cloudless heav'n.
At once their mutual glances mixt their hearts.
Then suddenly the car against a stone
Struck, and the enchanted vision fled away.
But from her heart he never fled, the Knight
With eye of blue, and locks of golden wave.

HUON.

Oh my prophetic spirit!

SALMA.

From that time

The Princess scorns the king; and lonely weeps
In secret: nor can ought relieve her woe
Save what augments her love—yet what avails it?
To-morrow Rezia sinks a breathless corse
In the fierce Tartar's arms—

HUON.

No—first the globe
Crumbles to atoms—there, the Knight himself
Shall share the feast, and claim the promis'd bride.

SALMA.

Aye—say you so—'tis strangely marvellous—
His eye—complexion—hair—speak favor'd youth!
Tell me—

HUON.

O'ertir'd with long fatigue I faint—
To-morrow, my kind hostess—oh, to-morrow!
Each moment is eternity—farewell—
I must retire to rest.

SALMA—*(pointing to a chamber.)*

There—angels guard you!
Good night! and may such dreams as love inspires
Steal time away, then wake, and find them true—
(shewing a place to Eustace.) Here rest your limbs.

EUSTACE.

Thanks, gentle dame—fatigue
Seeks not a couch of down—*(going)*

SALMA.

Tho' late the hour,
Fast as this crutch can aid my feeble limbs,
I'll bear the won'drous tale to Rezia's ear.

(Exit.

SCENE changes to Rezia's *apartment.*

REZIA—*rising from her couch.*

Ah! whither art thou fled, enchanting youth?
To these fond arms, that clasp thy shade, return!
Hear, while my lip now plights eternal truth,
Breathe on my cheek where virgin blushes burn.

Yet if alone a vision of the night
Thou glide to charm in sleep my tear away,
Come as I close my eyes, and loathe the light,
Here, on my heart thy hand sweet spirit! lay,
And say, as at thy touch its pulses move,
"So never bosom beat for earthly love."

MIRZA *enters.*

Methought I heard your voice—sweet Rezia soothe
Your woe in sleep.

REZIA.

Enchanting shade! return!
Ah whither art thou fled—return once more!

MIRZA.

Oh tell me, why that cheek, which late so pale
Droop'd like a lily broken by the storm,
Glows with the blush of health: and why those eyes,
Long clouded o'er with tears of hopeless woe,
Sparkle, as if some vision in the air
Flew, rob'd in bliss before you.

REZIA.

I beheld him.

It was no phantom of the night—I saw him
More beauteous than a God—his tender lip
Kist off the tear that on my eye-lid hung—
I fain had fled, but his melodious voice
Breath'd witchery on mine ear. You turn away—
You sigh—you will not speak—that sigh, that silence
I will interpret—

MIRZA.

Could I breathe a sound
That utter'd might console you, then these lips
Had not been mute—

REZIA.

Oh! if you love me, Mirza,
Oh rend not with rude hand the shadowy veil
That hides with show of bliss, the precipice
O'er whose steep brink I bend—I have but hope—
Why, why resign it? soon the silver cymbals
Ring with shrill clang, and echoing thousands rend

The sky with joyful shout—I, I, the victim
Must hasten to the sacrifice.

MIRZA.

Sweet Rezia!
She hears me not—it is your Mirza speaks—
Look on me, by these tears I do conjure you!
Despair in each fixt feature seems to brave
The dangers that surround her—

REZIA.

On they float,
Gay thousands shouting to the bridal feast:
The bride prepares her for the funeral.
The voice of death has called me, and my soul
Echoes the summons—if th' expected knight,
My plighted lord, heav'n-destin'd, fail to shield me,
Horasbec clasps a corse.

MIRZA.

Prevent it, heav'n!
(a loud knocking at the door)—What sudden noise?

(Mirza *goes.*

REZIA.

Haste Mirza—shadowy dream!
If with delusive charm thou has beguil'd
My fascinated fancy: if thy hues
Melt like the clouds whose transient colors fade
Before the sun that gilds them, what remains
But death to rescue me?

MIRZA *running in with* Salma.

Joy! Princess, joy!
He's found, the Knight is found.

REZIA.

Delightful Mirza,
Where is my brave deliverer?

MIRZA—*to* Salma.

Tell the tale—
Aye, o'er and o'er repeat each joyful word.

REZIA.

Speak, speak, good Salma!

SALMA.

Thus 'tis with you all—

A princess, or a peasant, no distinction—
All ear when love's the subject—first, he came

REZIA.

Who came?

SALMA.

In my lone cot but now I left him.

REZIA.

Left whom?

SALMA.

The Knight, the Knight—eye, hair, shape, all—

MIRZA.

It tallys with the dream—

SALMA.

Yes—eye of blue—
And long long locks that float like waves of gold—
Shape—oh your Bagdad courtiers show like boors
Before this foreign God—now you must know,
It chanc'd, I know not how, the youth bewitch'd me,
Or I had ne'er let slip the slightest hint
Of your prophetic dream—but when I told it,

In confidence—oh had you seen the youth—
His eye struck fire, and in his cheek the blood
Rush'd—like—your own—aye, aye, you're pair'd in heav'n.

REZIA.

Haste, Salma, tell the Knight his bride awaits him.

(*They all depart.*

SCENE changes to Salma's *cot.*

ARIEL *and* FAIRIES *enter, displaying different parts of a magnificent Eastern dress.*

ARIEL.

Say, Fays, are your charges in all featly done?
To my wand, as I wave, duly nod, one by one.

1st. FAIRY.

Hark! hark, to that neigh—'twas the wing'd Arab steed.
Not the rack of the night-storm out-races his speed.

2nd. FAIRY.

With sapphires and emeralds his trappings I grac'd.

3rd. FAIRY.

And he foams upon gold by my hand quaintly chas'd—

4th. FAIRY.

In eve's glowing mantle at sweet summer tide,

Two pages

1st. FAIRY.

I prank'd them,

4th. FAIRY.

parade at each side.

1st. FAIRY.

Look, look on this sabre.

ALL.

One diamond it shines.

1st. FAIRY.

I forg'd it unheard in the Gnome's central mines.

2nd. FAIRY.

The gems on this turban, I fill'd, one by one,

With light from noon-beams of the tropical sun.

3rd. FAIRY.

And the tints on this robe that gleam changeful in hue,

From the rain-bow I caught, as it vanish'd from view.

ARIEL.

These, on yon couch in order lay,
And weal or woe betide,
When Huon goes to greet his bride,
Fays! viewless tend him on his way.

CHORUS.

Pleas'd thy order we obey,
And viewless tend him on his way.

(*Fairies vanish into* Huon's *apartment.*

End of ACT 3rd.

ACT IV.

SCENE—SALMA's *cot.*

SALMA.

'Twas shrewdly said that wonders never cease—
Yet this surpasses thought—a lovely youth,

Destin'd for Rezia—yet there are forsooth,
Who laugh at dreams, and call us fools who trust them.
Yet sure 'tis time to rouse th' expected knight.
I am no witch, not I, yet well I know
What vision charms his sleep. Yet ah, 'tis late.
At mid-day Rezia weds—scarce two hours hence—
'Twere sin to let him clasp th' unreal shade,
And that stern king the substance.

EUSTACE *enters.*

My kind hostess
Know you yon pretty pages, spangled o'er
With liveries like the light! proudly they hold
A neighing barb, richly caparison'd,
Close at your cottage door—now, as I enter'd,
They bade me seek my lord.

SALMA—*(looking out and returning.)*

I know them not,
Sweet beauteous pages! such a steed! all fire—
Gold bit, and housings wreath'd with sparkling gems!
Our Caliph owns not such.

EUSTACE.

Well—I will rouse him.

Come forth, my lord—

SALMA—(*as* Huon *enters magnificently robed in an Eastern dress.*)

Oh Mahomet! defend me!

It is the Sultan's self—

HUON.

Fear not, kind hostess!

SALMA.

There's witchery here—I never brought the robe—

Fair Rezia sent it not.

EUSTACE.

Aye, aye, no doubt,

'Twas he, the giver of the golden bowl—

HUON—*(to himself).*

'Tis now the destin'd time.

SALMA.

It suits you rarely:

Fits like a charm: from head to foot, all right.

All, save these locks of gold that loosely wave:
They must not float thus—Knight! give me the turban.
So hide these ringlets—(*she puts it on* Huon's *head.*)

HUON.

Eustace, my soul glows—
Hostess! farewell! let these rich jewels thank thee—
One moment leave us.

SALMA.

Heav'n preserve your life!
Farewell—the bride expects you.—(*Salma goes.*)

HUON.

On I haste—(*to Eustace.*)
To death, or bliss immortal—rest thou here.
These gems of rarest value ill express
My grateful heart.

EUSTACE.

Bribe me to stay, Sir Huon!
Old Eustace like a coward hide his head
When you encounter danger, face to face!
No—if you live, I live; if there you fall,

At once the welcome wound shall rescue Eustace
From the keen anguish of long-lingering woe.
Lead on—

HUON.

What gift can pay thee?

EUSTACE.

What I feel:
Fond hope to guard brave Segwin's honor'd son—
Lead on—kind Oberon protect thy friend!

HUON.

Death, and mail'd Chiefs in vain the bride enclose.
Love, Vengeance, Fame, rebuke my long delay.

(Exeunt.

SCENE—Banquet-Hall in the Sultan's Palace.

Enter on one side, HORASBEC, ALMANSOR, ALMANSARIS, *with their suite—on the other the* SULTAN *and* REZIA, *with their attendants*—Priests, Emirs, Slaves, Guards, &c.

CHORUS.

Bagdad! rend with joy the air!
Asia! thy peopled empires o'er,
Echo the hymn from shore to shore:
While heav'n, consenting to our pray'r,
With glory crowns Horasbec's brow,
And seals with Houri bliss, fair Rezia's nuptial vow!

(At the conclusion of the Song, as the SULTAN *leads* REZIA *to give her hand to* HORASBEC, HUON *and* EUSTACE *enter.)*

HUON—(*on seeing the Bridegroom.*)

Ah! 'tis the vile blasphemer! fell assassin
Behold the son of Segwin—face to face
To proof of arms I dare thee—

ALMANSOR—(*shewing his arm with the magic bracelet.*)

Tartar monarch!
This arm defends thee.

HORASBEC—(*stopping Almansor.*)

'Tis a beardless boy.
Thus I chastise thy insolence.—*(They fight*—Huon *is victorious.)*

HUON.

Die, murderer!

'Tis Rezia—tis herself—(*seeing the Bride, who recognises his likeness to the vision as his turban falls off.*)

REZIA.

Oh wondrous sight!

'Tis he—th' enchanting dream deceiv'd me not.

ALMANSARIS.

What grace! what dignity! no mortal form!

Sure fabling poets, from such visions, shap'd

The God of love—

HUON—(*embracing* Rezia, *and slipping a ring on her finger.*)

With this I join our hands:

And, heav'n-united, thus before the world,

Huon proclaims his bride.

CALIPH *to* Rezia.

Thou suffer this!

A Christian Knight stain'd with the bridegroom's blood,

To clasp thee in his arms!

(The Emirs, Guards, &c. rush on Huon *and* Eustace, *who defend themselves.)*

EUSTACE—(*advancing before* Huon, *and striking on every side with his cedar club.*)

Now, son of Segwin!

Thus shall they fall before you.

CALIPH.

Seize them, slaves!

ALMANSOR.

Let me approach—

EMIRS—*rushing before him.*

Thou Christian dog!—Our Prophet

Thus roots you from the earth.

HUON.

Bite thou the ground!

ALMANSARIS—(*seising* Almansor's *arm.*)

Slay not that Knight!

EMIRS.

Die, wretch!

REZIA—(*darting thro' the throng, and throwing her arms round* Huon.

He bleeds, he falls!

Back slaves! I aid the hero—to his breast
Behold the passage. Rezia's heart his shield.
Strike here—so slaughter him—death, death unites us.
Spare him, my Sire. He comes, by heav'n ordain'd
To claim my nuptial vow.

EMIRS—(*rushing on*)

Root him from earth.

REZIA—(*swoons in* Huon's arms.)

Farewell—farewell—a thousand weapons smite us.

EUSTACE—(*seising the horn round* Huon's *neck, and violently blowing it.*)

Now blast of thunder! hear it, Elf-king! hear!

(OBERON *descends from a cloud—the adversaries of* Huon *fall motionless.*)

OBERON.

Thus far success is thine, intrepid Huon.
And matchless the reward. Behold the bride;

Best gift of heav'n. Yet never may thy hand
Lead her in triumph to thy native realm,
'Till direst proofs confirm your mutual faith
Fixt on the base of virtue. Thou, too, Rezia,
Pause, lest in after time, thou, hapless, mourn
A fleet delusion, and with vain regret
Weep, void of hope. Can Rezia, then, forego
Pow'r, and the imperial pomp of Bagdad's throne;
And stand the dread vicissitudes of fate?
Reflect fond maid! if these thy soul appall,
Oh heed my warning voice! renounce the Knight.
These, seeming breathless, as I wave my wand
Arise. The Caliph shall forgive his child,
The past no more remember'd. Now, decide,
Now free, and never more.

REZIA—(*sinks in* Huon's *arms.*)

Oh! bid me not again decide!
When on my dream the vision play'd,
Fondly I clasp'd his plighted shade:
Not death itself shall now divide.

The throne of Asia I resign:
Huon, my soul is pledg'd to thine.

OBERON.

Oh be ye blest!
Yet, ah! this heart-felt sigh marks Oberon's fear.
Huon of Bourdeaux! thou hast dauntless stood
The test of valour. Youth, now arm thy soul
For conflict where seductive passion views
The conqueror that has smil'd on death's mail'd brow,
Melt, and bow down in willing bondage chain'd.
Such, thou must now withstand.—(*looking on the adversaries of* Huon.)
Their trance dissolves.
Brave Knight! before Almanzor's magic bracelet,
Withering the arm of valour, thine must droop
Infirm to ward or wound. My pow'r avails not:
Virtue alone can aid thee. In dread silence
Fate seals my lip. Be virtuous. Bliss is thine.

(*As* OBERON *ascends his aerial car and vanishes in thunder and lightening, the adversaries of* Huon *start*

from their trance. Huon *and* Eustace *fall motionless, as* Almansor *stretches towards them his arm girt with the enchanted bracelet.* — Rezia *swoons on* Huon.)

CALIPH.

Force Rezia from his arms—Guards! seize those slaves!
Ere long their limbs shall feed the funeral pyre.

Exeunt omnes.

SCENE changes to the enchanted Wood, Oberon *lying restless on a rocky ledge, overshaded by gloomy mountains.*—Fairies *floating in airy dance round him.*

ARIEL.

Soft as the moon at midnight still,
Or shades that sweep a sunny hill,
Or a night-spirit slides away,
When the first cock calls up the day,
Float in light ring his couch around,
And sleep entice with soothing sound:
While at each measur'd pause I call
The music of the waterfall,

And low airs from the leafy dell,
When meek eve bids the sun farewell.

OBERON.

Sweet Ariel! sooth my soul with gentle song!

ARIEL.

Viewless minstrel! touch the lute,
Tun'd to my cadence soft and slow;
Chain each rude wind! all sounds be mute,
Save those that solace woe.

Save those that from the Æolian lyre
To whispers of a Sylph reply,
And vibrate o'er the enchanted wire
Faint murmurs of a melody.

Or those that wind thro' wreathed shell
At summer-tide when sea-maids float,
And on the spring-flood's moon-light swell,
Night-ditties chant, that, note by note,
Charm'd echo from her coral cave,
Breathes o'er the bosom of the wave.

OBERON.

Cease, cease the song—'tis vain—all harmony
Is discord to my ear—my soul is sad,
And such to me all nature—whate'er tempts
Of soft or smooth the touch: sounds sweetest heard,
From night's lone warbler, or melodious strain;
Whate'er of nature's scenes, sublime or mild:
And all that charms the sense in fruit and flow'r,
Delight by native excellence the mind
Pleas'd with itself—but to the mind diseas'd
All outward objects seem to change their nature;
Reflecting but the hue, and gloomy colour
Caught from the soul—away, and leave me here,
To brood in viewless misery.

ARIEL.

Say not so!
I long have serv'd thee, in the earth and air,
Nor fear'd in briny floods to wet my wings,
Nor singe my ringlets where the roaring flames
Clos'd on my passage—do not bid me leave thee;

But to a soul in smpathy with thine
Confide thy sorrow.

OBERON.

Thou hast serv'd me well,
And more from love than duty—Ariel! stay—
Yet—these sad thoughts—

ARIEL.

Brood not in silence o'er them.
'Twill but increase the suffering. Grief, that vents
Th' entrusted sorrow on some friendly breast,
Feels lighten'd of a load.

OBERON.

My Ariel!
Persuasive is thy voice of sympathy.
'Twere vain to hide my woe. On yonder cloud
That, dark as starless night, o'er-canopys
The rock on which I weep, behold imprest
What weighs upon my heart.—*(A vision on the cloud represents* Huon *chained in prison.)*

ARIEL.

On yon dark cloud,
As if some pencil dipt in Stygian hue
Had trac'd the portraiture, I see a youth
Chain'd in a loathsome dungeon.

OBERON.

Closer look.

ARIEL.

It bears the semblance of that gallant Knight.
Alas! that sight may swell e'en Oberon's tear.
Oh! let me loose his chains, and I will bear them
Gladly, nor shrink while the revolving sun
Toils round his yearly course.

OBERON.

No, gentle Ariel:
Fate wills not so. Severest trials wait him.
The Knight has look'd on death, nor chang'd his hue:
Now beauty's tempting witcheries assail him.
The wonder of the world, the fair Circassian
Lives but for him. Ah! tho' my wish at once

Could waft the youth beyond this visual world,
He must withstand the enchantress, or thy king
No more shall fix Titania on his throne.
What means that dreadful portent? lo! the form
(The vision on the cloud vanishes.)
Now vanishes; and thro' the severing clouds
Yon star of evil aspect glares on me.

TITANIA—(*unseen.*)

Oberon!

OBERON.

Ha! 'tis Titania's voice.

TITANIA *enters, and swoons in* Oberon's *arms.*

Oh Oberon!
One last farewell. Fate severs us for ever.

OBERON.

For ever! oh that death had empire o'er us!
(To Ariel.) Wave round her brow reviving airs.

TITANIA—(*recovering.*)

Farewell!
We meet no more.

OBERON.

Ah whence this deep despair?
Huon is rarely temper'd.

TITANIA.

None of earth
Can stand this trial. Hear, and hopeless mourn.
Late, as I lonely wept, on sudden heard,
A summoning voice thus rous'd me.—Yet I hear it.
" Thou! that hast sully'd thy once spotless soul
" With jealous taint, polluting thy pure nature
" With frailties of the race of earth-born man,
" Go, expiate thy offence, in guise and mood
" Most loath'd by elfine purity. Assume
" Semblance of one by lawless love enflam'd:
" And with that lip whose native innocence
" Immingled soul with soul in elfine bliss,
" Like a seductress woo. While magic dreams
" Entrance Almansaris, bear thou her form
" Gifted with every grace of fairy charm.
" Call in the aid of dance and melody,

" And lure of royal sway: nor fail to urge
" Death's dire alternative. So tempt the Knight.
" And, if he yield - - - - I swoon'd, and heard no more.
I woke, and call'd on thee.

(A voice from one unseen.)——Titania.

TITANIA.

Ha!
It is the summoning voice.

(The Voice.)

Come forth—

'Tis now the destin'd time.

(Oberon and Titania embracing.)

Farewell! Farewell!

Exeunt omnes.

SCENE changes to an apartment in the Caliph's *palace.*

REZIA—ALMANSOR—NADINA.

ALMANSOR—*(to Nadina.)*

This signet take—at sight of it, the guards
Unbar the prison gates—o'er Huon cast
Robes fit for royal suitor—so attend him
Usher'd in pomp and splendor to the palace

Of fair Almansaris—hence—

NADINA.

I obey—(*Exit.*)

ALMANSOR.

Rezia! thou must forget him—

REZIA.

Never—never.

ALMANSOR.

Almansor long has loved thee, long concealed
The passion that consum'd him—ah! beware,
Urge not by unavailing scorn my soul
To ruthless violence.

REZIA.

Cease, cease, Almansor.
My soul is wedded to another.

ALMANSOR.

Hear me—
No earthly force withstands my magic pow'r.
Rezia I all command.

REZIA.

Not Rezia's heart—

Pure love, and spotless faith that grav'd in heav'n
My witness'd vow, shall triumph o'er the pow'r
Of spell, and breath'd enchantment—

ALMANSOR.

Dost thou scorn me?
I will not waste vain words to soothe thy pride—
Consent—or force—

REZIA—(*drawing a dagger.*)

Behold this lifted dagger—
Advance, I fall a breathless corse before thee—
Why should I live? Ah, haply, thou, lov'd Huon,
Art mine no more.

ALMANSOR.

Live, Rezia, live for vengeance—
Oh come, and I will force him from the arms
That clasp his neck—he dyes in torturing pangs.

REZIA.

No—if false Huon in another's arms

Can taste of bliss, bé Rezia's silent tear
His only torture.

False youth! for whom I die, still lov'd in death,
Catch the last whisper of my less'ning breath;
Its prayer shall soothe thy pang at life's decline.
Oh come! and ere my spirit pass away,
Kiss my cold lip, and bending o'er me, say,
"Peace to thy soul, wrong'd maid! that pardon'd mine!"

ALMANSOR.

Rezia! thou hast a father. On thy word
His life depends—beware—when next we meet,
Consent, or view thy sire in tortures dye.

Exeunt.

SCENE changes to a gloomy dungeon.

HUON *and* EUSTACE *in chains.*

EUSTACE.

Not for myself I grieve—distress and Eustace
Have long held fellowship—slow years on years
Have turn'd these hairs to grey; nor seen a smile

Steal o'er my furrow'd cheek, but yours has been
Sun'd by unceasing joy—it will have vent,
Pardon me, master—thou, in bloom of youth,
In the fair season when each day is summer!
And the sweet Princess - - -

HUON.

Eustace—name her not,
Or grief will swell to frenzy.

EUSTACE.

Hark! what sound?
The pond'rous gate rings on its jarring hinge.
Look, Sir, a female form—(*Nadina, and slaves enter.*)

NADINA—*to the slaves.*

Unlink these fetters—
Knight! follow me—

HUON.

Fair visitant! whoe'er— —

NADINA.

Haste, haste, and follow me—

HUON.

I stirr not hence,

'Till this, my other self, is free as I am—

EUSTACE.

Think not of me—oh anger not the lady.

HUON.

Our fate is one—we live or die together.

NADINA—*to the slaves.*

Free him—(*to Huon.*)—thy will is law—we but thy slaves—

Away—to happiness I guide thy step.

Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the palace of Almansaris, *decorated with the utmost magnificence*—Titania *in the form of Almansaris, on a throne, surrounded by female dancers and musicians; and beautiful girls weaving wreaths of roses.*

NADINA *enters, leading in* HUON—*at his entrance they sing and dance.*

HUON—(*starts back.*)

What may this mean?

NADINA—(*leading him forward.*)

To happiness I guide you.

HUON.

'Tis Rezia's self—no other form on earth
Boasts such resistless charms—strange wonder awes me—
Methinks some hand invisible restrains
My lingering footsteps—

TITANIA.

Fear not, lovely youth!
Thou art not come an uninvited guest.

HUON.

I see, yet doubt my sight—delusive visions
Gild fancy's transient day-dreams—

TITANIA.

Look around thee—
What show of false presentment mocks thy sight?
These are thy slaves that hail their lord's approach:
The roof yet echoes with the song of welcome.

Fear not the form that beckons thee—approach—

HUON.

Ah, no—it is not Rezia—walls of gold,
The diamond-studded throne, yon pendent lights,
Each brilliant as a planet in its course,
Deceiv'd my dazzled sight—oh pardon me,
Fair lady! speak thy will—

TITANIA.

Say, lovely knight!
Hast thou forgotten me?

HUON.

I, ne'er till now
Gaz'd on thy won'drous charms.

TITANIA.

Yet, beauteous youth!
This hand preserv'd thy life, this breast thy shield,
When o'er thy brow a thousand scymetars
Flash'd instant death—

HUON.

I saw but one alone

Who still at hazard of her life, sav'd mine—
Oh pardon! lady, that a lover's eye
Sole fixt on her, ne'er turn'd aside to gaze
On thy transcendant beauty—

TITANIA—(*descending from her throne, and clasping his hand.*)

This hand preserv'd thee:
This hand that presses thine, and at the touch
Glows with new ardor. (Spare me, ruthless fate!—*aside*)
The blood is fled that sun'd thy glowing cheek.
The fire of love that lighten'd in thy glance
No longer beams. (Yet, yet the youth resists—*aside.*)
(To the attendants) Now rouse his drooping spirits—
swell the song.
Ye round him float with limbs that glide in air:
And mid the tuneful labyrinth enwreathe him
With chains of rosy twine. So lead the knight
A willing captive to the throne of love.

(They dance in measure to the following Song, and bind Huon *in wreaths of roses.)*

Knight! as round thy limbs we wreathe
Soft chains that blue-eyed pleasures wove,
Come, where no clarions battle breathe,
But beauty heaves the sigh of love.

The hauberk's twisted links resign
For blooming braid of roseate flow'rs,
And pitch thy tent beneath the vine
Whose tendrils clasp Circassia's bow'rs.

Seize the sweet prime—enjoy thy May.
Each moment charm with new delight:
Ere borne on youth's fleet wing away,
Love and pleasure speed their flight;
And thou shalt droop, ere life is fled,
Like one long number'd with the dead.

HUON.

No—I will gaze no more—lest Syren charms
Seduce the entangled sense. (*aside*)—Oh virgin bride!
Beam thy chaste influence over me.

TITANIA.

Cease—away—(*her attendants depart.*)

Oh be no longer mute: no ear shall catch

The sigh thou breath'st, but mine by love attun'd.

HUON.

Lady! on one unworthy—

TITANIA.

Say not so—

Th' omnipotence of love around thee beams

Beauty's resistless radiance. Why that gloom?

Ah why that pensive silence? I have seen

The eye of adoration gaze on me

As on a worshipped goddess.

(*Takes a lute, and sings.*)

Ah! why lov'd youth, this coy delay?

Oh let my eye but glance on thine,

Thou too wilt gaze thy soul away,

And feel the flame that glows in mine,

Then, as our looks each other fire,

Catch from my burning lip the trance of sweet desire.

HUON.

Cease thy seductive strains! oh beauteous lady,
Reserve those matchless charms, that faultless form
Soft molded by the graces, for the arms
Of some blest youth, whose heart, not pledg'd like mine.
Shall glow with mutual ardor.

TITANIA.

(Virtuous youth—*aside.*)
Yet—yet awhile reflect! nor slight this hand!
Thy fate depends on me—decide thy doom—
Does beauty tempt? Almansaris is thine—
Does boundless empire tempt? my pow'r shall lift thee
To heights beyond the gaze of pale-ey'd envy.
Reflect—mid fiery tortures death awaits thee.
Decide thy doom.

HUON.

The will of heav'n has fixt it—
Heav'n heard my vow: and sacred love unites
Huon and Rezia.

TITANIA.

Death dissolves the tye—

Slaves!—(*they enter*)—hence, and hurl this traytor to the dungeon—(*Huon is led away.*)

My dreadful task is o'er. Heroic Huon!

So Rezia firmly meet fate's direst blow!

And love in purest bliss end all our woe.

End of ACT 4th.

ACT V.

The Caliph's Palace.

CALIPH—*and* ALMANSOR'S *Page.*

PAGE.

Caliph of Bagdad! thus Almansor speaks—

"Thy warriors, thy selected chiefs in arms

" Fled, ere I struck—come forth, and at my summons
" Before assembled Bagdad, bring my bride,
" The heiress of thy throne—

CALIPH.

From mortal arm
I may not hope deliverance—I obey—
Go—bid my daughter hither—(*Page goes*)—gracious heav'n!
Thus at the close of life, when hoary hairs
Most claim due reverence:—at the weary close,
When, nature shrinking from the turmoil, seeks
Repose from worldly woe—now, must I crouch
At a proud conqueror's nod.—(*Rezia and the Page enter.*)
My child! - - - - -

REZIA—(*in sable robes.*)

Oh speak.
Thou hast a daughter left—

CALIPH.

Alas my child!
These melancholy weeds that mark thy woe,

Will raise the tyrant's fury—hapless Rezia!
Array thyself once more in bridal robes—
Gems and resplendent ornaments must cast
Their blaze around thee, and supply the bloom
That grief has cankered in the cheek of youth.

REZIA.

Let me depart, and my sad life devote
To solitude and tears—I had not thought
To have expos'd my grief to human eye,
Nor to have breath'd in human ear the woe
That preys upon my heart—my father!

PAGE.

Caliph!
The impatient conqueror waits—He, who commands,
Brooks not delay—

CALIPH.

Let the stern victor rage—
I was not born to shake at earthly threat—
Ah! tho' imperial pride bow down before him,
Nature has higher claims—yet all I ask

Is but to shed a solitary tear
O'er a lov'd child—(*to Rezia*)—To save a father's life
Could'st thou consent - - - -

REZIA.

To sacrifice my own?
Most willingly—oh! I will smile on death
As on a gentle friend, whose sheltering arms
Sooth me, and still each pang of earthly grief—
Sweet comes o'er hopeless woe the call of death,
Like the lov'd voice of one whom dreams restore.
"Oh rest!" it whispers with assuasive breath,
"Rest in the silent spot with those that weep no more!"
Say, what my doom?

CALIPH.

Thou must in bridal robes
Meet stern Almansor.

REZIA.

Grieve not thus, my sire!
'Tis not these charms alone, 'tis empire tempts him.

Resign proud Asia's throne—Oh come with me,
And I will lead thee to some lonely spot
Where peace shall visit thee—oh, if thou wish
To sooth my sorow, let me lighten thine—
The spirit of o'erflowing tenderness
Shall steal thy woes away—and thou shalt sink
In heav'n's due time within thy daughter's arms,
As in a tranquil sleep—resign thy sceptre—
Peace be our lot!

PAGE.

Almansor claims thy hand—
The conqueror summons, where assembled Bagdad
Shall view the knight, that scorn'd Circassia's charms,
In flames expire—

REZIA.

That scorn'd Almansaris!
He dies in flames! Thou! whom my soul adores,
Rezia shall save thee—(*to the Page*)—to Almansor haste,
If by all dreaded Mahomet he swear
To guard uninjured to his native realm

The stranger Knight; and fix on Asia's throne
My honor'd Sire—(*gives him a ring*)—bring this, and
I will wear it
As his connubial gift—else, death shall free me.

Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Prison.

HUON *and* EUSTACE.

EUSTACE.

In sooth I found them hospitable ladies—
Sir, while those wonders blaz'd before your sight,
Gems, and gold walls, and lights that dimm'd the sun,
And bevys of gay girls that swept the lute,
And wanton'd in the labyrinth of the dance,
I was not left neglected—

HUON—(*to himself, regardless of Eustace.*)
Still my soul!
Soon will this torture cease—

EUSTACE.

They spread before me
Viands, and wine that foam'd in golden flaggons;

And dainty damsels beckon'd me to banquet.
All bad me welcome: and they smil'd, like friends,
Familiar with my features—

HUON.

When I think
On each event, that, in the crouded compass
Of a few transient hours, has teem'd with wonders
Surpassing human credence, much I doubt
If truth, or vivid fancy formed the scene.
If truth, the heated brain o'er midnight bowls
Shapes not such fantasies—

EUSTACE.

Sir, feel you not
These ponderous chains? such metal, of this weight,
Was never forg'd in visions.

HUON.

Rezia, Rezia!
Was it a vision when this lip prest thine?
Thou too, my faithful friend! it grieves my soul,
I brought thee hither: I, alone, the cause

That death, mid torturing agonies, shall close
Thy course of honor—

EUSTACE.

Grieve not for old Eustace.
It quite unmans me—I had fain, indeed,
Have laid these bones beneath my native earth
With those, (heav'n bless them) who once sweetly smil'd,
When in their arms I lay a wimpering babe.
Such thoughts, yet more thy kindness, good my lord,
Force out these tears. Yet, after all, that spirit
Once seeming friendly—no, in sooth—I dare not;
Else, Sir, these iron cramps that bind me down,
And the foul air, and intercepted day
That thro' the net-work of yon grated loop-hole
Umbers our countenance with sickly hue:
These are sad tokens that the wily elf
But lur'd us to deceive—

HUON.

Distrust him not.
Superior pow'r o'er-rules him—Fairy king!

Tho' all the princely honors that enwreath'd
My cradled brow: tho' all that youth fair vison'd
Picturing fame's temple with heroic forms:
Tho' all the glorious deeds that grac'd my sires,
Each above each tow'ring in high desert:
Should vanish, with the memory of Huon,
Unknown, and unlamented—Fairy king!
No whisper of reproach shall stain my lip;
Nor death in torture shake my trust in heav'n,
Whose angel o'er the brow of innocence,
Extends his viewless shield—

SONG by an invisible spirit.

Tho' night-storms wildly rave
When rolls the wreck upon the tumbling wave:
Tho' from his viper hair
Death shake the spotted pest that taints the air:
He, who in heav'n has trust,
While worlds beneath him crumble into dust,

Looks with uplifted eyes,
Where hope her anchor rests, and points to opening skys.

HUON.

Heav'nly minstrel!
My strengthen'd spirit thanks thee—

EUSTACE.

Sir, the air
Was sweet: the voice and finger closely wedded,
And tho' I saw him not, my ear's not dull—
'Twas the same minstrel that did charm my cave.
Yet had th' invisible warbler at the close,
Hung round your neck the horn, and grac'd my hand
With the gold cup, the tune had mainly pleas'd—
Hark! heard you not?—(*the sound of unbarring the prison is heard.*)

HUON.

Along the vaulted cells
Some footstep echoes loud—and gleaming lights
Stream thro' the dungeon's depth—the ministers

Of death now claim us—oh that I alone
Might satiate their revenge, and thou, my friend,
Hadst ne'er beheld the face of Segwin's son!

(*Rezia, and attendants enter.*

EUSTACE.

Sir, we can die but once—it is herself—
This is no minister of death.

HUON.

Oh form
Once visionary seen, and ne'er forgotten!
Thou! whom a fairy pencil highly wrought,
Yet with faint hue dishonor'd - - - - -

REZIA.

Thou art free—
Slaves! loose their chains—haste to thy native land!
There never be the name of Rezia heard:
There never more a vision of the night
Retrace her shade!—ah, no—when far away,
Ah let a tender thought, in happier hours,
Dwell on the fond remembrance of a maid,

Who, tho' she urge thee hence, with ceaseless tears
Will weep when thou art absent—

EUSTACE.

He forget thee!
No—were he tomb'd, and should some passing stranger
Chance unawares to whisper near his grave
The name of Rezia, his awaken'd spirit
Would rive the sepulchre.

HUON.

I leave thee here
To weep my absence! Life, without thee, Rezia,
Were agony beyond death's torturing flames—
No earthly pow'r shall part us—

REZIA.

Oh for ever farewell—I implore thee to leave me—
To a maiden more blest, far from Rezia remove,
Yet, clasp'd in her arms, Huon! say, nor deceive me,
Thou wilt shed on her bosom one tear for my love.
On my knees
I do beseech thee, hence—more dire than death

Horror will rack thy soul—oh! thou wilt loathe
Her whom thou lov'st—

HUON.

Hear me! heav'n-destin'd bride!

REZIA.

Thy bride! ah Huon!—

CALIPH *enters.*

Come, my child! away—
The time is past—this hand must lead thee forth—
Knight! thou art free—hence to thy native realm.
Fly from the misery thou hast caus'd.

HUON.

Oh speak—
Who, who has freed me?

CALIPH.

Rezia.

REZIA.

Ask no more—
Depart—or view me breathless at thy feet.

CALIPH.

Knight! to restore thee to thy native land,
And free a helpless sire from torturing death
This unexampled daughter - - - -

REZIA.

Oh, my father!
If ere thy child was dear to thee, conceal it!

HUON.

Say, what the sacrifice?

CALIPH.

Virtue shall grave
In golden characters—"behold the Maid,
"Who for another's life, resign'd her own
"To voluntary woe"—I haste to give
To stern Almansor—

REZIA.

Oh!—(*swoons*)

HUON.

A breathless corse—
Sweet Rezia! soft—she breathes. Heav'n-plighted bride!

No earthly pow'r shall part us.

PAGE *enters.*

Caliph! haste,

Almansor fiercely threatens—

HUON.

Tell him, slave!

That Rezia's plighted bridegroom, face to face,

Dares him in arms—(*Page departs.*)

REZIA.

Thou, whom my soul adores!

Rush not on death—he bears a charmed life.

HUON.

Went Fate before him with the scythe of death

Huon would fearless front him.

EUSTACE.

Look, my lord,

As I did cast my fetters on the flints

They rattled on this rusty sword—no light one—

I am no scholar, Sir, but I do feel

Deep characters engraven on the blade.

HUON—(*takes the sword, and traces the characters.*)

"I'm brother to Durandal, forg'd by Fays."

Thanks, Oberon—

EUSTACE.

Aye, aye, no doubt, the Wood-god—

HUON.

Now, charms avail not—such as heav'n has form'd us,

We meet in equal combat, man to man.

PAGE *enters.*

Sir Knight, Almansor speaks "bring forth the Christian,

"And I will deign to look on him."

REZIA—(*as Huon goes forth.*)

Oh Huon!

Rush not on death.

HUON.

Eustace, protect my bride!

Caliph! this arm shall fix thee on thy throne—

Come forth— *[Exeunt.*

EUSTACE.

Oh do not weep so, gentle lady!

Each tear you shed, seems like a drop of blood
Wrung from my heart. I will not quit your side,
Tho' I had rather mid the shock of arms
Stand, while the clattering iron bruis'd my helm,
Than hear you sigh thus—have good heart, I pray you,
The Fairy is no changeling: no light worshipper
Of fortune's sun-shine hour: he'll not desert him:
No, nor his own right hand: 'tis Segwin's son:
And these big giants oft have pigmy souls.
I've made them skip like infants—(*a loud shout.*)

REZIA.

Oh that shout!
Oh Huon! my lov'd Lord—

EUSTACE.

The welkin rings
With bursts of joy—the mountain is laid low.

CALIPH *enters.*

Haste, Rezia, haste—the Knight has rescued us.
Come mid assembled Bagdad, where Almansor
Bows down before the conqueror.

EUSTACE.

Yes, I said it.

The mountain is laid low, and Segwin's son
Equals his gallant sire. *(Exeunt.*

SCENE changes to the great Square.

HUON—ALMANSOR—Emirs—People.

PEOPLE.

Hail to the conqueror.

ALMANSOR—(*on his knee, delivering up his sword to* Huon.

Christian! spare my life.

(CALIPH, REZIA, *and* EUSTACE *enter.*)

HUON.

Kneel at the throne of Charlemaine, and say
I have aveng'd my sire—(*Almansor departs.*)

CALIPH.

What earthly gift
Can rightly thank thee?

PEOPLE.

Rezia, his reward.

CALIPH.

The hand of heav'n protects thee—take thy bride.

(The Scene opens and discovers the Palace of the Fairies adorned with festive splendor.

OBERON *and* TITANIA *in bridal robes on their throne. Groups of Fairies phantastically arrayed, dancing and playing on various instruments.)*

They sing round Huon *and* Rezia.

All is fulfill'd—hail, Mortals, hail!

Truth, Virtue, Faith, o'er all prevail.

OBERON *and* TITANIA—*(taking the wreathes from their brows.)*

Fays! crown them with these wreathes that bound our brow.

FAIRIES *crown them and sing.*

Receive this wreath

Of amaranthine flow'rs by Fairy twin'd!

High meed for man assign'd—

These, on earth shall o'er you breathe

Bliss descending from above,
When virtue graves in heav'n the vow of wedded love.

OBERON—(*rising from his throne, and solemnly addressing* Huon.

Knight! not thy fearless valor, not the sword
Of charmed steel, nor tone of fairy horn,
But confidence in heav'n alone preserv'd thee.
The destin'd time draws near, when elfine pow'rs
No more with mortal shall hold intercourse:
But while the world endures, the pure in heart,
They, who in time of trial, firmly stood
Fixt on the base of virtue, shall draw down
High succour from a source that ne'er shall fail.

END OF OBERON.

ORESTES,

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

By WILLIAM SOTHEBY, *Esq.*

F. R. S. & A. S. S.

TO THE

MARQUIS of ABERCORNE.

MY DEAR LORD,

One of the purest motives of Dedication, arises from the desire of offering a testimony of esteem and affection to those, whose intercourse has enlarged the mind, and whose friendship has contributed to the general happiness of life.

It is scarcely necessary for me add, that such is the motive of the present Dedication to your Lordship.

I remain,
My dear Lord,
Most sincerely yours,
WILLIAM SOTHEBY.

Seymour-Street,
April 5th. 1802.

ORESTES,

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ÆGISTHUS - - - - King of Argos.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ARCAS - - - - - Governor of Orestes.

CALCHAS - - - Prophet and Priest of Jupiter.

NIREUS - - - - ancient domestic of Agamemnon.

PHANOR - - - - an Officer belonging to Ægisthus.

Guards, &c.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

PHEDRA - - - - Attendant on Clytemnestra.

SCENE—Argos.

TIME—that of representation.

ORESTES.

ACT I.

SCENE 1st.—*The Temple of Jupiter.*

CALCHAS *at the Altar.*

Hear Jove supreme!
Thou! who, o'er all in highest heav'n enthron'd,
Look'st on the frail inhabitants of earth,
Oh hear my prayer! let not the sun, new ris'n
On this dread day, unconscious of thy pow'r
Withdraw its beams—bid Argos own thy might;
While thou, in visitation of thy wrath,
On the polluted feast of lust and murther
Shalt loose the impatient thunder!

NIREUS *enters.*

Calchas, hail!

CALCHAS.

What brings thee hither?

NIREUS.

Clytemnestra's will.

This day, when yearly rites, that mock the heav'ns,
Bid Argos solemnize the blood-stain'd nuptials,
Fear harrows up her soul.

CALCHAS *to himself.*

Their doom is fixt.
Not vain at dawn the omen.

NIREUS.

Clytemnestra
Now bids thee to the palace.

CALCHAS.

What, once more
To hear in insolence of pride, Ægisthus
Defy the vengeance of long-lingering Jove,
And taunt his holy priest! Yes—I will go:
If Jove confirm the omen—I will go:

But not to sooth her terror. Yet, say first
Of wrong'd Electra.

NIREUS.

On this day's return,
Not only, as of old, Ægisthus binds
Her limbs with chains, and in the cavern's gloom
Bids her, unheard, rave on her long-lost brother,
Th' avenger, lorn Orestes - - - -

CALCHAS—(*interrupting him.*)

Hear, hear heav'n!

NIREUS.

But ere the sun go down, his vow is past
To join by force the daughter of Atrides
With one low-born: that never heir arise
To claim the crown of Argos, or avenge
Her murther'd sire.

CALCHAS.

The measure is complete.
'Tis doom'd above, the impious are no more.

I will consult the God—Nireus retire—

Exeunt.

SCENE 2nd—*An apartment in the palace.*

ÆGISTHUS—CLYTEMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Scorn Clytemnestra these unwonted fears:
Prepare to grace the triumph.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No Ægisthus—
Not oracles, nor voice of answering shrine,
Signs from the flight of bird, or bleeding victim,
So mark impending doom, as this night-vision,
The harbinger of vengeance.

ÆGISTHUS.

Clytemnestra,
Shall idle terrors, shadows of a dream
Subdue thy daring spirit? these are mock'ries
That dotage dwells on, or the senseless fears
Of credulous childhood - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(interrupting him.)*

Hear me—

ÆGISTHUS.

I have seen thee

Mid the fierce clamours of the madd'ning tumult

Stand with undaunted brow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou hast beheld me

Stain'd with the blood of man, a warrior's blood.

The woman stood before astonish'd Argos,

Her dagger dropping gore—I dread none earthly.

This supernatural sight o'er-powers my soul.

Look here—while Clytemnestra shakes before thee,

Hast thou no fear?

ÆGISTHUS.

None from the dreams of night.

While yet Orestes liv'd - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(interrupting him.)*

Is he too murther'd?

ÆGISTHUS.

If gold can bribe, Orestes is no more—
Why droops thy brow? his father's spirit fir'd him:
His hate pursu'd, his vengeful blade hung o'er us.
Speak I ungrateful words, thy son is dead?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou never hadst a child—

ÆGISTHUS.

Mourn not his loss.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Here, at this breast he hung.

MESSENGER *enters.*

Dread Lord, the pomp
Waits but thy presence—

ÆGISTHUS.

Go—bid forth my train.
Come Clytemnestra, rob'd in Troy's proud spoils
Grace, as of old, the triumph.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No—Ægisthus—

The horror, that o'er-pow'rs me, on my brow
Deep stamps its visible impress—let the base
Conceal their fear: such as I am behold me—
I know not female artifice that lends
The lip of misery a dissembling smile.
No robe of Phrygian state shall blaze on me,
No banquet hail my presence—

ÆGISTHUS.

Have I wrong'd thee?
Dost thou repent the deed that joins our doom?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Were it again to act, again this hand
Would slay the man who wrong'd me—thee, Ægisthus,
I still have faithful found. Whate'er the doom
That Jove decrees, tho' thunder burst around me,
Thee I will ne'er desert.

ÆGISTHUS.

I know thee now.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Go, glitter in thy splendor. Yet—I pray thee—

Yet—nay I charge thee, that no word, no look,
No, not a silent smile betray contempt.
I brook not insult, less from thee than all—
Beware—

ÆGISTHUS.

Why this to me? speak—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

When the spectre
Glar'd on me as I shriek'd - - - thou—dost not heed me.
'Tis man thou fear'st—hast thou no other fear?

ÆGISTHUS.

Say on—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I breath'd aloud a vow to heav'n—
Confirm it—

ÆGISTHUS.

Can I aid thee?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Bid Electra
On Agamemnon's sepulchre, complete

The funeral rites! We reckt not of the dead.
Th' accepted offerings haply may appease
The avenging spirit—from this blood-stain'd hand
Such rites were profanation.

ÆGISTHUS.

But Electra
Now groans in chains, and, ere the night-fall, forc'd
To hateful nuptials, vents her idle rage
Beneath a servile roof.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Free her from chains.
Urge not the unequal tye. I have but her.
Yet, if regardless of a mother's will
That daughter mock my fear, fix thou her doom,
E'en what thou wilt, so I no more behold her.
Her voice has terror in it: and her eye
In awful silence fixt on mine, exerts
Strange mastery o'er my spirit—

MESSENGER *enters.*

Calchas comes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say thou consent'st—

ÆGISTHUS.

In all be thou obey'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Avoid the indignant prophet.

(Ægisthus *exit, as* Calchas *enters.*)

Holy Seer!

Accept thy Sovereign's thanks, that thou, long time
A stranger to this palace, once again,
At Clytemnestra's call, hast deigned to hear
What weighs upon her heart—

CALCHAS—(*interrupting her.*)

No thanks, for this,
To me are due—ere my reluctant step
Past o'er thy threshold, the inspected victim
Gave sign; alone that signal I obey'd—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Jove-honor'd prophet! super-natural horrors
Mark me the victim of heav'n's imminent wrath.

CALCHAS—*(pointing up.)*

There justice reigns—thou shalt not scape thy doom.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy prescience, Seer, can all unfold: thy pray'rs
Wing'd intercessors at the throne of Jove
Avert impending destiny, and turn
The thunder in its course.

CALCHAS.

Here prayer avails not.
When impious mortals tremble at their doom,
Alone repentance at the throne of Jove
Pleads, and is heard - - - - - Repent!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not—not for this
I call'd thee. Priest! thy office hallows thee:
Or, ere this hour, the tongue that rudely taunts
Its sovereign, had been mute.

(Calchas going in anger, she stops him.)

Stay—

CALCHAS.

Impious mortal!

I leave thee to thy fate—

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*detaining him.*)

Not unrevealed—

Or shield me from these horrors, or unfold

Clearly the dread unknown; that now my soul

May summon all its strength to meet heav'n's wrath.

Interpreter of fate wilt thou reveal it?

CALCHAS.

I speak but what Jove dictates—thou, be brief—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Calchas, thou know'st, this day, ten years gone by,

The son of Atreus perish'd—

CALCHAS.

Slain by thee—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye—I deny it not—

CALCHAS.

'Tis known to all.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well then—I slew him—ever on this day
We hold a solemn festival at Argos,
In honor of my nuptials with Ægisthus:
Add - - - if thou wilt - - - of triumph o'er the slain.
This too is known to all—but 'tis not known,
That ever duly on this day's return,
E'en at the very instant, at the dead
Of midnight, when I smote him, a deep groan,
Such as he utter'd when he fell beneath me,
Bursts on my ear: and one, who cries "revenge,"
Floats by; a shapeless figure indistinct:
For I have gaz'd on't with unaltered eye,
'Till the dim shadow floated from my sight.
Last night the groan was heard, the voice was heard
Of one who cry'd "revenge:"—the shadow floated:
But, gradually the uncertain shape assum'd
The form of Agamemnon, mail'd in arms,
Such as he stands, terrific on his tomb,

CALCHAS.

Didst thou then gaze with an unalter'd eye?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No—'twas himself—I could not gaze on him.
But, ere I turn'd, I saw the wound I made:
And thro' the steel forth gush'd the blood: he caught it,
And from the hollow of his hand pour'd forth
An offering to the Furies: then drew near
And cast the dregs on me.

CALCHAS.

That was no phantom.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Twas fresh, 'twas living blood, 'twas warm to sense,
Such as it spouted on me when I smote him.
I turn'd aside, but still before my sight
Which way my scar'd eye glanc'd, arm'd Furies stood.
The viper brood that round their tresses tangled
Their scaly coils, turn'd all their stings on me.
On me, each bickering eye, that roll'd in blood,
Shot sparks of fire. A voice of thunder burst,

"Thus, will we lap thy blood"—"the dead shall slay
"thee"—

I shriek'd: in rush'd the attendants. All was void—
But they too heard the iron of their feet
That echoed on the pavement: they beheld
The flames in trailing flakes along the gloom—
Say! how shall I appease th' avenging Furies?

CALCHAS.

By offerings suited to their ruthless nature.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Prophet! explain those words—"the dead shall slay thee."

CALCHAS—(*aside*)

Aid me, inspiring Jove!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wilt thou not answer?

CALCHAS.

In silence hear the pow'r, who guides my voice.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh speak!—

CALCHAS.

This day, a stranger youth, heav'n-sent,
To Argos bears Orestes' funeral urn.—
He can unfold the mystery of fate.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Would he were come!

CALCHAS.

He comes—obey the God—
Thou, and Ægisthus, to the secret bath
Where Agamemnon perish'd, lead the stranger;
There, force him to reveal, howe'er reluctant,
What Phœbus has imparted—bid Electra
On Agamemnon's tomb libations pour.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where bled Atrides? said'st thou---in the bath---
Not there---not there---I pray thee.—

CALCHAS.

On that spot
Question the stranger youth: and, if averse
Force him to speak.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I thank thee, Seer! farewell.—*(Exeunt.*

(*as they go out,* Ægisthus *and* Phanor *enter.*)

PHANOR.

Electra doth refuse——

ÆGISTHUS.

Refuse, to quit

The gloomy cell!

PHANOR.

"No earthly pow'r, this day,

"Shall force me to behold the light I loath."—

Such were her words.—

ÆGISTHUS.

Bid her expect my presence.

(Phanor *goes.*)

Oft, proud Electra, hast thou vainly sought

To bear thy offerings to Atrides' tomb.

If proffer'd, thou reject it, never more

Thy voice, domestic fiend, shall threat Ægisthus.

(Exit.

SCENE 3rd.—*A Prison.*

ELECTRA.—PHANOR *enters.*

PHANOR.

Ægisthus comes.

ELECTRA.

Is there yet more to bear?

ÆGISTHUS *enters.*

Go, Phanor—

ELECTRA.

No—be present—stir not hence—
With him I hold not secret conference.—

ÆGISTHUS.

Yield not to vain suspicions—if thou wilt,
Detain him—bid him strictly note each word,
Record each look—Yet, were no witness near,
Woman, the weakness of thy sex protects thee.
Thou hast no cause for fear.—

ELECTRA.

Phanor, retire.—(*he goes*).
We dread not whom we scorn—speak, I am mute.

ÆGISTHUS.

I would that we had met in fitter place!

ELECTRA.

It suits a sufferer that delights in grief:
It suits an outrag'd soul that broods on vengeance:
It suits the day, the deed, thee most, base murderer!
Look on these chains: think on the groans of death
That echoed through these vaults.

ÆGISTHUS.

I come to grant
What thou hast oft implor'd.

ELECTRA.

I oft have claim'd
Rights still deny'd: the melancholy right
To shed a tear on the unhonour'd tomb
Of him whom thou did'st slay—I ne'er implor'd thee.

ÆGISTHUS.

'Twere well that thou had'st sued—time was, Electra,
That I with gifts and proffer'd kindness sought
To sooth thy haughty spirit.

ELECTRA.

Gifts! to me!

Tyrant! thou speak'st to Agamemnon's daughter!
No bribe can lure the lion race to fawn—

ÆGISTHUS.

Therefore the lion race is gall'd with chains.

ELECTRA—(*with vehement indignation.*)

Where art thou, brother?—I had hope in thee—
The sun keeps on his course, and the firm earth
Rests on its base—Yet Jove holds sway in heav'n.—

ÆGISTHUS.

I come to free thee from these slavish chains:
Free thee from nuptials that disgrace thy birth,
And bid thee offer at a father's tomb
The long-neglected rites.—

ELECTRA.

Thou mock'st me, tyrant—

ÆGISTHUS.

I loose thy chains.—

ELECTRA.

No—not a link shall fall.—

These bonds are precious to me—time shall come

When such may chain thee where the Furies close

Their adamantine rivets.—

ÆGISTHUS.

Dost thou wish

To honor Agamemnon?

ELECTRA.

More than life—

If life the sacrifice, my father! hear me!

For thee, another daughter gladly dies.

Iphigenia bleeds again in me.

ÆGISTHUS.

Go forth, and place on Agamemnon's tomb

Thy mother's offerings.

ELECTRA.

Said I not, thou mock'st me?—

ÆGISTHUS.

I mock thee not. 'Tis Clytemnestra's will.

ELECTRA.

Her will! aid, heav'n! repentance yet may touch her!
Yes. I will bear the offerings. Lead me to her.

(Exeunt.

End of ACT 1st.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—A Street within the Walls of Argos.

ORESTES *bearing an Urn.*—PYLADES, ARCAS.

ARCAS.

Brave youths! by friendship join'd, and now by fate
In common danger yok'd, here safely rest.
None know you here. I, in strange garb disguis'd,
Long absent from these walls, will venture on,
And timely caution give.—

PYLADES. *(pointing to* Orestes.*)*

How deep his groan!

Grief, like the mildew on the bloom of spring,

Preys on his faded prime. Oh soothe his soul!

ARCAS.—*(to* Orestes.*)*

The oracle of Phœbus shall not fail.

Soon will your mission cease.

ORESTES.

Oh!

PYLADES.

Why that groan?

ARCAS.

He droops o'er-wearied—rest—behold the goal—

These are the walls of Argos. There, the palace

Tow'rs proudly eminent.

ORESTES.

Oh!

PYLADES.

Droop not, brother.

ARCAS.

Thou! whom these arms receiv'd, e'en from the cradle,
When sad Electra rescued thee from death,
Orestes! firmly execute thy charge.
Thou, Pylades! watch o'er him. Rouse his soul
By words that fire the hero. Here remain—
I will not long be absent. *[Exit.*

PYLADES.

Lean on me.
Friend of my soul! thou more than brother, come,
Lean on this faithful breast!—tho' long the way,
And rough the mountain tract, I oft have seen thee
From dawn to night-fall urge the brindled wolf,
And laugh to scorn the partners of the chase,
That fainted in the noon-beam—silent—still—
Think on the race when you outstript the Phocian
Nam'd from his speed, the Brother of the wind.—

ORESTES—(*to himself.*)

These are the walls of Argos;

PYLADES.

Look upon me—
Hast thou forgôt, when thou a boy didst wield
The cæstus weight, and level'd at a blow
Polydamas, who proud of giant size,
Unrival'd, buffeted in sport the wind?

ORESTES—(*to himself.*)

There tow'rs the palace, proudly eminent.—

PYLADES.

Alas! the themes once wont to please, avail not!

ORESTES.

Oh the disgrace! that Agamemnon's son
Should thus approach the palace of his fathers!
Thus lone, disguis'd, and stranger to his kin,
The midnight plunderer in the gloom that shrouds him,
Starts, as he falters on—Oh! Pylades!
We, in the light of day, 'mid wondering throngs,
When every eye gaz'd on us, oft have vow'd
To rush where glory summon'd us, tho' death

Stood at the goal, and held the wreath to crown us.
But---now---

PYLADES.

Thou must obey th' inspiring God.
By artifice, not force ensure success—
Rouse from despair—revenge thy father's death!

ORESTES.

By any deed but this—a mother's murther!

ARCAS *enters.*

Brave youths! go boldly on—the palace gates
Are left without a guard: and Clytemnestra,
(So rumour speaks) lone broods o'er boding fears.

ORESTES—(*with horror.*)

Not that the place—not this th' appointed hour—
At midnight—in the bath—where fell my father—
Not in obscure response Apollo spoke.

ARCAS.

First Orestes
Bear the feign'd tale to Clytemnestra's ear.
That done, on Agamemnon's tomb complete

The funeral rites. There claim th' appointed signal.
On that thy doom depends: on that, the faith
Due to the Delphic shrine. Thy father's image
Shall, as instinct with life, thrice wave his lance;
Or we are made the mockery of vain words,
And murder stalks unpunish'd—

(A festive chorus in the procession of Ægisthus is heard.)

Hark! that sound
As of some festive choir!

PHANOR—(*with some of* Ægisthus's *guards enters.*)

What may this mean?
Why bends that mourner o'er the funeral urn?
Nought of disastrous portent on this day
Shall cloud rejoicing Argos—Hence!—(*to Orestes.*)

ORESTES.

Beware—

ARCAS.

Touch not that youth—we mean not to offend—

PHANOR.

Hence!

PYLADES.

Say, ere we depart, why rings the shout
Of joy and choral song?

PHANOR.

'Tis Argos' feast,
Her annual feast: when every slave, and captive
Free as his lord, the common banquet shares.

PYLADES.

What cause thus consecrates a nation's joy?

PHANOR.

Ægisthus's nuptials!

ORESTES.

(*who, till now, had appear'd regardless of their discourse, bursts forward.*)

Slave! 'tis false.

PYLADES.

Oh heed not—
Grief for the dead distracts him.

PHANOR.

On I haste

To join the pomp. Away, nor linger here,
Sullying with ill-tim'd gloom the general joy.

(*Exit.*

ORESTES—*drawing a dagger.*

Come Pylades—he dies—a lion's nerve
Strengthens my sinews.

ARCAS.

Stay rash youth! you rush
On self-destruction—Guards and thronging crouds
Compass him round.—

ORESTES.

Nor guards, nor throngs avail,
When vengeance strikes the blow by justice doom'd,
It strikes like heav'ns wing'd bolt: earth quakes beneath it,
And all that live fly from the prostrate victim.
I will not be restrain'd——come—

ARCAS.

Pylades!

If thou regard his life, oh hold, detain him!

(*the chorus is again heard.*)

ORESTES.

That shout again! I will not be controul'd!
Oh may it rouse the thunder that but sleeps
At Jove's right hand!—Away——

PYLADES. (*restraining him.*)

Orestes——friend!

ORESTES.

Ha!

PYLADES.

Hear me!

ORESTES.

Any pray'r --- but that --- but that ---
Thou sway'st at will each impulse of my soul.—

PYLADES.

My brother!

ORESTES.

Do not, I beseech thee, urge
Thy influence o'er me—heard'st thou? 'tis his feast!

Base Argos revels for Ægisthus' nuptials!
It is Ægisthus, not a mother's breast
I haste to pierce.——

PYLADES.

The oracle decreed
Art should prevail, not force.

ORESTES—(*his hand on his breast.*)

Here—here it speaks—
I want no other oracle. Stay thou—
Jove! let me strike him dead! I ask not life.
Farewell.——

(*as he rushes out,* Pylades *embraces him.*)

PYLADES.

We die together.—

ORESTES.

Stay, my brother!

PYLADES.

Lead on!

ORESTES.

But - - - they will slay - - - thee - - -

PYLADES.

Boldly go.——

ORESTES.

Mould, mould me at thy will—what shall I do?

PYLADES.

Swear, if thou meet the tyrant in mid triumph,
Thou wilt not strike him ere th'appointed time.

ORESTES.

An oath! to thee!—my friend! take my pledg'd hand.

ARCAS.

Oh virtuous youths! great Jove! in safety guide you.

(*Exeunt.*

SCENE 2d.—*The great Square.*

The triumphal procession of Ægisthus.—*He, in a car, adorn'd with garlands, drawn by four horses.—Music, Choral Hymn, Guards, People shouting.*

ARCAS, ORESTES, PYLADES, *crossing the stage.*

ARCAS.

I pray you, pass this way—avoid the press.

ORESTES.

E'en where thou wilt.

PHANOR—*seeing them.*

Unmanner'd stranger! hence—

Bear off that funeral urn.—

ORESTES.

Let me pass on.—

PHANOR.

Guards! force him from the place—

ÆGISTHUS.

What means this tumult?

PHANOR.

Look not this way—oh King! some men, obscure,

Strangers, it seems, to Argos—

ÆGISTHUS.

Ha! an urn

Crossing our pomp! reveal your name, your country.

What here your purpose?—speak—

ORESTES.

Our country, Phocis:

Of race unknown to fame.

ÆGISTHUS.

Whose ashes, Phocians

Rest in that urn?—

ORESTES.

--- We bear to Clytemnestra ---

ÆGISTHUS—*(interrupting him.)*

The ashes of Orestes?—

ORESTES.

--- in this urn ---

ÆGISTHUS—*(descending from his car.)*

Thrice welcome! strangers! share our joyful feast—

Not unrewarded you return from Argos.—

Give him that royal robe.—

ORESTES.

We seek no gifts—

We may not share the banquet—look on this. (*the urn*).

From Strophius we are come—the Lord of Phocis—

By whose command we bear the last remains

Of him that was Orestes—When he fell

Before the Altar of the Delphian God
Slain by an Argive, ----

ÆGISTHUS.

—Cease --- we reck not this—

ORESTES.

King! it imports thee much—When slander strikes
The fetter'd slave, he, bold in innocence,
Confronts the base accuser, and asserts
The dignity of virtue! hear, Ægisthus!
Orestes slew the wretch who pierc'd his breast;
And the Assassin with his dying breath,
Pronounced ----

PYLADES—*(endeavouring to silence him.)*

Peace, Brother!

ORESTES—*(not regarding him.)*

—That Ægisthus sent him!

ÆGISTHUS—*(after a long pause.)*

That urn, thou say'st, contains Orestes' ashes:
Why hither brought?—Phocis knows funeral rites.

ORESTES.

May not the ashes of a son repose
Where sleeps his sire?—May not one kindred tear
Be shed upon his urn, who never knew
In life the blessing of a kindred smile?

ÆGISTHUS.

Electra lives—a mother's tear, no doubt—

ORESTES—*(aside.)*

A mother! ---

ÆGISTHUS.

—Go --- to Clytemnestra bear
The ashes of her son ---

(to his guards).—Ye—safely guard him.—

(Exeunt.

SCENE 3d.—*An Apartment in the Palace.*

CLYTEMNESTRA, PHEDRA.

PHEDRA.

Vainly I urg'd—Electra still refuses,
(No cause assign'd) from other hand than thine
To take the funeral offerings—Lo! the bowl ---

And this the consecrated hair you sent—*(presents them.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No other hand but hers, may bear the gift:
None left save her alone. 'Twas Calchas spoke it:
I may not disobey—conduct her hither - - - (Phedra *goes.*)
Omit whate'er these Prophets have enjoin'd,
All fails, and we, forewarn'd, provoke our doom.

ELECTRA, *and* PHEDRA *enter.*

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(to* Electra.*)*

Thou hast refus'd to bear my funeral offerings!

ELECTRA.

I dar'd not place them on my father's tomb,
'Till I had commun'd with thee—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say—what cause?—

ELECTRA.

What cause? And dost thou ask? And shall I speak it.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Haply thou deem'dst it base, beneath thy birth,
To take these gifts from other hands than mine?

ELECTRA.

I long have suffer'd base indignities—
Lo these——— *(her chains.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I bad Ægisthus free thee.

ELECTRA.

Yes,
He proffer'd - - - I refus'd—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yet, in that guise,
Offerings were insult—

ELECTRA.

No—not that the insult—
This, this is profanation, when the woman
Who slew her husband, mocks his tomb with gifts.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Daughter - - - - !

ELECTRA.

Oh would that I could answer—Mother!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My soul is overcharged with horror. Spare me—

ELECTRA.

Therefore I came. 'Tis now the suited time
When words may pierce the soul. Oh! had I found thee
A thoughtless reveller, rob'd in nuptial pomp,
And smiling at the thron'd adulterer's side,
I never had addrest thee—now I view thee
Clad in the garb of woe: and thy pale hue
Marks the deep wound that festers in thy soul.
I see this, yet rejoice not: no, nor feel
The triumph that repays, exalts the opprest
When the oppressor falls. Behold these tears—
They stream for thee—(*clasping* Clytemnestra's *hand.*)

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And have I yet a child?

ELECTRA.

Oh pow'r of heav'n! now give me words of force
To change the soul. Turn not away, my mother!
No whisper of reproach shall wound thy ear.

We long have been estrang'd, not known each other:
For ever, at my coming, base Ægisthus
Stood like a fiend between us. Oh my mother,
Year after year has past unheeded o'er thee.
In the brief breathing space, this side the tomb
In mercy left, one moment yet is thine:
The present—Now.
Oh! on the tablet of eternity
Record it by contrition—

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(highly agitated, aside.)*

Oh, I cannot!

ELECTRA.

Turn not away—not for myself I plead.
All, I forgive thee, all. I plead for one
Lov'd more than life. I plead for lorn Orestes:
For a lov'd brother; for thy son, I plead.
Recal the wanderer - - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh!

ELECTRA.

At Argos crown him.

Restore him to the empire of his fathers;

So will I bear the votive gifts, and sooth

Him, him that was thy husband. I will tend

Thy troubled couch: nor leave thee at the hour

When guilt at death's approach shall rise before thee

A Fury arm'd. Repent, and crown Orestes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, haply at this hour, he too - - - -

PHEDRA *enters.*

Dread Queen!

Sent from Ægisthus, at the palace gates

A stranger youth - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A stranger youth!

PHEDRA.

Who bears

A funeral urn.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis he—I come, I come—

ELECTRA.

Not yet—oh hear!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My fate on him depends.

ELECTRA.

Now, on my knees, I pray one moment hear me.
I saw thy big tear tremble. Oh, my mother!
We never, since the day my father died,
Have known one common woe.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No more detain me.
'Tis he—away—

ELECTRA—*(in anger.)*

Dost thou despise my prayer?
I on my bended knee, have clasp'd thy hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say, wilt thou bear these offerings to the dead?

ELECTRA.

Yes: or I ne'er shall view my father's tomb.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Away.——*(Exit.)*

ELECTRA *to* Phedra.

Take thou the offerings—follow me.

(Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Gates of the Palace, magnificently decorated with trophies.

PHANOR *and Guards*—ARCAS, ORESTES, PYLADES.

PHANOR.

These are the gates with Ilium's trophies grac'd—
Pass not that threshold—here expect the Queen.

ORESTES—(*after a pause of wonder.*)

Hail palace! and thou portal! o'er whose arch
The spoils of Troy by Agamemnon plac'd—

PYLADES—(*interrupting him, aside.*)

Beware—we are observ'd—the guard yet lingers.

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*heard in entering.*)

Where is the stranger? Clytemnestra greets him.

ORESTES—(*hearing her voice, looks up.*)

Turn me to stone, or I am lost for ever.

(CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, PHEDRA *enter.*)

Art thou the mother of Orestes?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yes—

ORESTES.

Whom then behold I there, of royal port?

ELECTRA.

His sister.

ORESTES.

Thou—Electra!

ELECTRA.

What of him?

ORESTES.

Thou, that Electra! thou—Orestes' sister.

ELECTRA.

Long suffering bears the show of length of years.

Be but Orestes safe, and life new-born

Will glow in every vein—thou answer'st not—

Why art thou silent?

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*impatiently.*)

Say, what brought thee hither?

Stranger! why thus transfixt in senseless woe?

Why gaze on her? I, I am Clytemnestra.

ORESTES.

I come the bearer of a mournful tale

To thee and to thy race.

ELECTRA.

Hah!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Youth! disclose it.

ORESTES.

Heav'n haply has possest thee with a spirit

That yields not to misfortune—on that brow—(*Electra*)

I note alas! the lineaments of one

Who will not hear my tale of woe, unmov'd—

Let her depart: and one brief word unfolds

My mournful mission.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hear'st thou not, Electra?

ELECTRA.

Speak it.

ORESTES.

I pray thee urge her to retire.

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*to* Electra.)

Thou hear'st—

ELECTRA.

I stir not hence—my soul is dead
Alike to joy and grief, save that alone
Which from a brother flows—and if thou bring
Ought of Orestes, 'till thy voice reveal it,
No force shall hence remove me.—

ORESTES—(*to* Electra.)

Arm thy soul—
Here lies, within this urn, what was Orestes.
An Argive basely slew him—We, from Phocis,
Bring this to place it in Atrides' tomb—
Thou hast my mission.—

ELECTRA.

Wherefore should I breathe?

I have no hope—Earth! hide me in thy womb!

(falls down.)

ORESTES.

Oh let me raise thee!---

ELECTRA.

Touch me not, I charge thee.

Not with that hand that held Orestes' urn.

My Father! thou shalt hear, and aid Electra.—

(Exit.

ORESTES.

Oh!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Heed her not!—thy unexpected words

Have pierc'd my heart. Yet stranger! go not hence.

(*to all the others.*)

You---stand apart—good youth!---

ORESTES—(*with horror.*)

What would'st thou, woman?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy aid!

ORESTES.

I cannot aid thee—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou alone

Canst free my soul from agonising horror.

Gifts of rare worth shall crown thy prompt compliance.

A feast is in the palace held this night:

I shall not join the revels—while they banquet,

Meet me alone. Things of high import urge.

Why dost thou turn away?

ORESTES.

Meet thee alone!

Oh! ask not that!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A heav'n-taught Seer enjoin'd it—

The prophet Calchas.—

ORESTES.

Ha! 'tis passing strange!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say thou consent'st—

ORESTES.

I'll meet thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Lone ---

ORESTES.

Expect me.—

(*Exeunt.*

End of ACT 2d.

ACT III.

SCENE 1*st.*—*A Street in Argos.*

ORESTES—PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Arcas will soon return—here wait his coming.

I must depart alone—

PYLADES.

Why force me from thee?

ORESTES.

Forbear—

PYLADES.

Not habit, nor the tyes of blood,
But sympathy of nature made us one;
We never have been sunder'd—hand in hand,
We still with equal pace have shap'd our course
Till this sad hour—our joys our griefs the same.
One cradle rock'd our infant sleep. Our sports
In youth the same; the same adventurous perils
Enur'd our growing strength to stem the battle—

ORESTES.

Were it to stem the battle, Pylades!
We were not now to part!

PYLADES.

Yet, let me join thee.
Each wish, new springing in thy mind, ere utter'd,
My ready zeal prevented. Grant me this.

ORESTES.

Brother, thou art unkind: it wrings my soul.
Strange doubts perplex—I will not long be absent.
There dwells the prophet. A brief word at once
Unveils the mystery. I go alone.
Farewel.

PYLADES.

Yet—go not thus in anger from me!

ORESTES.

Come, to my heart. And, if it seem, my brother,
That there beyond just time I linger - - -

PYLADES.

Well—

ORESTES.

Seek me.

PYLADES.

I shall not fail—this, this is kind.
One word - - - and then - - - farewell—

ORESTES.

Be brief—

PYLADES.

Orestes,

Now, by the vow that death should ne'er disjoin us,
When, prostrate at the hallow'd shrine of friendship,
Tears, for each other shed, gush'd forth; I charge thee
If the Seer threaten danger, call on me.—

ORESTES.

I would not live without thee. Art thou answer'd?

PYLADES.

Farewel. (Orestes *goes*.) His gloomy silence awes my soul.

ARCAS *enters*.

Where is Orestes? leave him not, I charge thee—

PYLADES.

Hast thou not prosper'd, Arcas?

ARCAS.

None are left
Of Troy's proud conquerors, save neglected veterans
Who dare not shew a scar. On every side
New dangers threat. Suspicion closely marks us.
E'en mid the license of the public feast

The guards are doubled, and each question'd stranger
Who falters in his answer ----

PHANOR—*(to* Arcas.*)*

Follow me.—

(guards enter.

ARCAS.

In what have I offended?

PHANOR.

Not unwatch'd
Hast thou held secret conference with men
Of sterner times, who shun us as a race
That have forgot our fathers. Come thou forth
Where tortures shall force out unwilling truth.

ARCAS—(*looking on* Pylades.)

Be sure, no torture shall unlock these lips.

PHANOR—(*to* Pylades.)

Speak'st thou to him—thou too beware—his fate
Perchance impends o'er thee. *(Exeunt.*

PYLADES.

Lost, lost Orestes! *(Exit.*

SCENE changes to the Temple of Jupiter.

CALCHAS—(*to a Minister.*)

Now let him enter. The clear sparkling flame
(Orestes *slowly advances.*
Gave no ungrateful sign—approach the altar.

ORESTES.

Hail!

CALCHAS.

Not reluctance, youth! nor ought of honor
Due to the Minister of highest Jove
Delay'd thy entrance: holy rites enjoin'd it:
And suppliant Kings must wait 'till fav'ring omens
Permit approach.——

ORESTES.

Hail Seer! I bring thee not
Off'rings of votive gold, and precious incense:
No victim led by me shall stain the altar.
If heav'n, ungifted, hears not him who calls,
Seer, I retire in silence.

CALCHAS.

There are gifts

Of higher rate than gold and hecatombs:

Gifts, which from op'ning heav'n draw blessings down:

The tribute of an uncorrupted heart.

If such thy offering, speak—

ORESTES.

My years are few.

As yet - - - these hands are pure - - - but - - -

CALCHAS.

Freely speak.

ORESTES.

If thou can read the heart, in mine behold

The bitter conflict of a troubled spirit,

That agonis'd by woe, doubt, fear, despair,

Dreads e'en the wreck of reason.—Seer, assist me.

CALCHAS.

Poor youth! I pity thee—I will assist thee—

My voice shall still the tumult of thy soul.

ORESTES—(*with vehemence.*)

Not that—thou must not still my soul—oh rather
Urge to its height the storm, that so my arm
May execute its mission—holy Seer!
Thou talk'st to one of that disastrous mood
Whose mind no longer master of itself
Acts not its resolve. Seer! I am bound
To deeds that shock my nature. 'Tis most horrible!
Turn this to stone, (*striking his breast*) that, at the name of mother
Sheds drops of blood, and I will do the deed!

(*falls on the altar.*

CALCHAS—(*after a pause.*)

'Tis He—the long expected—(*aside*) 'tis th' avenger.
Thou must perform, unquestion'd, heavn's command—

ORESTES—(*rising gradually almost to frenzy.*)

Prophets may speak, and Oracles pronounce
"So move"—"this deed be done"—"'tis Heavn's command"—
But they forget that the poor instrument

To execute that will, is Man, weak Man.
Rocks, at the call divine, leap from their base,
Earth, at the word, deep to its centre shakes,
The sea, and the wing'd storm, and fiery bolt
Wait but a nod. Be these the instruments
To execute heavn's vengeance on the world.
But let not man be urg'd to shed man's blood.
What, if the guilt of an abandon'd woman
That slew her husband, calls down signal vengeance!
Must the son plunge a dagger in the heart
Of her who bore him?

CALCHAS.

Aid inspiring Jove!
Offspring of Agamemnon, Troy's great conqueror,
Orestes!—

ORESTES.

How—Orestes! why thus call
A wandering stranger, a lost wretch unknown?

CALCHAS—(*with enthusiastic dignity.*)

I know thee—know thou me—'tis Calchas speaks.

I, I, the minist'ring Priest, stood at the altar:
This consecrated blade I hold before thee
Gleam'd in my hand, descending swift in act
To pierce the proffer'd bosom of thy sister,
Whom Agamemnon to Diana's shrine
Had led, his first-born, Iphigene, to slaughter.
The virgin knelt beneath me, and to heav'n
Look'd up with fearless eye. Before me, bow'd
The father, in his mantle veil'd from sight.
I heard his groan: deep as the groan of death.
The father felt: the chief of Greece obey'd.
Taught by thy father, son, obey the Gods.
Fir'd by thy sister - - - -

ORESTES—(*seising his dagger.*)

Seer—'tis done—thy dagger!

CALCHAS.

This never shall be stain'd with human blood.
It flashes on my mind. Thy zeal transports thee.
Hast thou forgotten it? not this the blade—

Heav'n, in fit time, will arm thee with a weapon
Forg'd for the dead.—

ORESTES—*(full of horror.)*

'Tis true - - - the very blade,
(Said it not so?) with which she slew my Father.
So spake the Pythian: and that none, save that,
And trusted to me by a mother's hand
Must do its office. How shall I obtain it?

CALCHAS.

Go forth—thou shalt possess it—now delay not.
Go to thy father's tomb, invoke his shade:
There fate's portentous sign shall fix thy doom.
If unappeas'd the spirit claim revenge,
Strike, without dread—farewell.—

ORESTES.

Seer!—I obey—

(Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Tomb of Agamemnon.—His statue in armour on the sepulchre.

ELECTRA, PHEDRA.

ELECTRA.

Forgive! dread spirit of my sire! forgive!
Bring me the bowl - - - the offerings - - - on the tomb
Lo, these I place: this, on the earth pour forth—
Heard you that hissing foam? the unhallow'd stream
Bubbles, and froths, and vanishes, in fumes
Loathsome to sense. And, lo! the earth beneath
Peel'd bare, as if the lightning, in its passage
Had scath'd it, marking out to unborn ages
A spot accurst, where grass nor herb shall spring.
To Clytemnestra go. I have obey'd
Her will. Relate, most solemnly I charge thee,
What thou hast witness'd here.——

PHEDRA.

I shall not fail.

(Exit.

ELECTRA.

Oh honor'd shade! that in the realms of night
Hast sense of human act (else wherefore this?)
(pointing to the earth.
Deign thou to pardon, that a daughter's hand
Has dar'd pollute thy sepulchre, with gifts
From her - - - who slew thee. I have none to offer—
But I will pour upon thy tomb, my Father!
Vows that more priz'd than incense of the east
Shall gratify thy spirit. Vows of vengeance:
Vengeance against thy slayers. Sire! assist me!
None breathe on earth who hear Electra's cry.
He, He, for whom alone, hope yet awhile
Sustain'd my soul, Orestes is no more.
The rather thou arise! that, at thy voice,
A woman's feeble arm may strike the blow
Resistless as Jove's thunder—Hark! some step
Approaches - - - here I may unseen retire
'Tis He—the Phocian whose unhallow'd tongue

Proclaim'd Orestes' death.

(conceals herself behind the tomb.

PYLADES, ORESTES, *enter.*

PYLADES.

Draw near the tomb.

ORESTES.

Give me the urn—no hand but mine may place it—

ELECTRA—*(starts forward.)*

Yes—there is One---

ORESTES.

Thou! here—

ELECTRA.

Nay—start not, stranger!

Thou in my soul hast fixt a cureless wound:

Yet, if thy heart be human, sooth my woe!

ORESTES.

What is thy wish?

ELECTRA.

Give me, I pray, that urn—

ORESTES.

This cannot sooth thy woe.

ELECTRA.

Thou ne'er hast known

A sister's love—

ORESTES.

Alas!

ELECTRA.

Give me the urn—

So never may'st thou know that grief of heart

Which finds its only solace in the tear

That falls upon the dust of one most lov'd.—

ORESTES—(*aside to* Pylades.)

How shall I act?

ELECTRA.

Thus - - - on my knee - - -

ORESTES.

Oh rise!

ELECTRA.

Consent, I pray—the tears steal down thy cheek!

Oh youth! thou can'st not now refuse my pray'r.

ORESTES—(*to* Pylades.)

Rise—take it!—Friend! these gushing tears betray me—

PYLADES.

Be firm! 'twere dangerous to reveal the truth.—

ELECTRA—(*clasping the urn.*)

Orestes! oh my brother! oh sole cause
For whom I have sustain'd year after year
The ills of loath'd existence! Thou art gone!
Thou too hast left me! left me, reft of hope,
To shed lone tears that bathe th' unfeeling urn.
Was it for this I snatcht thee from the cradle
When keen-ey'd murther thirsted for thy blood?
I rescued thee that thou in manhood's strength
Might rise th' avenger of a father's death:
Rise, the restorer of a glorious race
Which sprung from Jove! here, here, alas! thou liest.
While yet my hand has strength to hold the urn,
Oh while my lips now press the farewell kiss,
Strike, strike me dead, kind Heav'n! and thou, oh stranger!

(I have no kin, no friend, no brother left)
Here place Electra.—Blest alone in this,
That death unites her ashes with Orestes.—

ORESTES—(*bursting from* Pylades.)

I will not be restrain'd—thou hast a Brother.
Behold Orestes here.—

ELECTRA.

Thou - - - thou - - - Orestes!

ORESTES.

Behold this well-known sign.—

ELECTRA.

Oh! (*shrieks.*

ORESTES.

Trust the oath
Of vengeance breath'd on Agamemnon's tomb.

ELECTRA—(*rushing to his arms.*)

I trust my heart—and do I hold thee living?
Oh, let me gaze on thee, thou godlike youth!
Clasp thee again! oh let me feel once more
The pressure of thy arms, and thy warm breath

That pours new life within me.

ORESTES.

Oh, my sister!

And is it thus we meet? how pale thy cheek!

Oh thou hast suffer'd much!

ELECTRA.

'Tis all forgotten—

Oh, golden light of day! and thou great Jove!

Hear my exulting voice!

PYLADES—(*interrupting her.*)

Restrain, Electra!

These shouts of clamorous joy—

ELECTRA.

What envious stranger

Dares interrupt my transport?

ORESTES.

Look on him—

'Tis Pylades—my friend.

ELECTRA.

My second brother!

Thou com'st to share our triumph.

PYLADES.

Oh restrain

Thy transport—much I fear - - -

ELECTRA—(*interrupting him.*)

What cause for fear?

Doubt'st thou success will crown us? 'tis Orestes!

Who can oppose him? so stood Hercules

When the Nemæan lion gasp'd beneath him.

ORESTES.

This is no hour of triumph—cease Electra!

This is the dreadful crisis mark'd by fate.

My Pylades! thou know'st that none on earth,

Save Agamemnon's offspring, must be present

When I invoke his shade, and claim the signal,

Dread harbinger of vengeance.

PYLADES.

I must leave thee—

ORESTES.

To Calchas go—there, in due time, expect me.—(*Exit.*)

Electra, hear! nor interrupt my words,
How strange soe'er— — —

ELECTRA.

Speak—not the dead more silent—

ORESTES.

It fits thee, but in part, and briefly, now,
To know how past my youth:—let this suffice:
Such lore, as suits a monarch, Strophius gave.
When the first down began to shade my cheek,
(A few fleet months now past) Strophius reveal'd
My birth, till then unknown; and at the shrine
Of Phœbus, bade me from the God enquire
My future fate—I went—a voice thus hail'd me.
" Son of a murder'd Father! thine to slay
" The slayers—they, by fraud, the chieftain smote.
" By fraud they perish. At thy twentieth year"
(Complete this day, e'en this, on which they hold
The feast of blood)—" to Argos go, thyself,
" The bearer of the tale that speaks thee dead.
" At midnight—in the bath—on the same spot

" Where bled Atrides—with the self-same weapon,
" That steel with which the wife her husband slew,
" Son, pierce thy mother's bosom"—at the word
I swoon'd—Electra—(*she seems fainting.*)

ELECTRA.

I am sick at heart—

ORESTES.

Oh thou hast more to hear, more dreadful far!

ELECTRA.

'Tis past—proceed——

ORESTES.

A voice of thunder rous'd me—
" Mortal! if thou dispute the will of heav'n,
" Hear thy dread sentence—thou shalt roam o'er earth
" Stranger to man. No house shall give thee shelter:
" No hospitable board afford thee food:
" The rock thy resting-place: thy fellowship
" With beasts of prey: foul leprosy shall eat
" Thy life, by lingering pangs slow worn away."

ELECTRA—*(highly agitated.)*

Brother, thou shalt obey. They knew not mercy.

ORESTES.

I dare not disobey—Look here, (*shews his arm*) Electra!

ELECTRA.

'Tis horrible—

ORESTES.

And ne'er to be effac'd

But by the gushing blood of her who bore me---

ELECTRA.

Thrice, thrice she struck the blow, without remorse—

What follow'd, quickly speak—

ORESTES.

With shuddering awe

I bow'd, and touch'd the altar—then the voice

Spake as before. "To Argos, go, invoke

"Thy Father's shade: if, unappeas'd, the manes

"Claim justice, the fixt statue on his tomb

"Shall thrice, in sign of vengeance, wave his spear."

ELECTRA—(*starting up.*)

Shade of my Father! rise, and save Orestes.

Begin the invocation.—

ORESTES.

Yet - - - my sister! - - -

ELECTRA.

Why this delay?

ORESTES.

I have a secret grief.

I dread to utter it - - -

ELECTRA.

Confide in me.

ORESTES.

He knows it not, the friend, the bosom friend,

Who reads my heart—I would not shock his soul.

He, He, perhaps, would fly this fated wretch.—

ELECTRA.

Electra never—by our Father's spirit

Who watches o'er us, I conjure thee, speak.—

ORESTES.

Know, when my mother bleeds (so spake the voice)
Her furies from that hour shall goad me on,
(Rendering each day a curse, each night unholy,)
From land to land, 'till back to Greece I bring
From Tauris' shrine, with blood of strangers stain'd,
One sacred to Diana—this was utter'd:
And, that of all on earth, but One alone
Should watch my flight, and tend me at the hour
When Furies howl around me——

ELECTRA.

Lo! that one.
Mid direst woe, the Furies howling round,
Rendering each day a curse, each night unholy,
I, I, will tend thee; and my soul shall feel it
Bliss, all that earth can give. For thou, my Brother,
Wilt on this sheltering bosom rest thy brow:
And, when, at intervals, peace sooths thy soul,
Thou too wilt turn a kindred eye on mine,

And kindly look on me—delay no more.
Begin the invocation.—

ORESTES.

Now, Electra,
Gaze on the statue with unshrinking eye.
I dare not trust my senses. If it stir,
In silence follow me—Shade of my Father!
If unappeas'd thy manes :—if the blood
Of those who slew thee shall be shed for thine,
If 'tis thy awful mandate that the son
Should slay his mother— — — —

(Mid peals of thunder and flashes of lightning the Statue waves the spear, and a voice cries
" Vengeance, Vengeance, Vengeance.")

End of ACT 3d.

ACT IV.

SCENE 1st.—The Temple of Jupiter.

CALCHAS.

The light'ning flash'd—the Spirit claims revenge—
Dark prophecies, of old obscurely veil'd
Flash on the sight—the son shall slay his mother!
Soul of the guilty! melt with fear! shake earth!
While Justice from her adamantine throne
Looks down, and says, "Be done." ---

PYLADES *enters.*

Some danger low'rs.—
They are not at the tomb—forlorn Orestes
Who shall protect thee now?

CALCHAS.

--- The pow'r who sent him.
Wait thou the destin'd time—

PYLADES.

Yet, Seer! reflect,
The horrors of the scene, the gloom of death,

The invocation of a vengeful spirit,
The call and summons to a mother's murder,
And that portentous signal which confounds
The faculties of man: these, singly, shake
Minds of firm texture: and combin'd 'gainst one
Of soul so deeply agonis'd, at once
May o'erturn reason.—Hah! (*seeing* Arcas *enter.*)

ARCAS.

Time-honor'd Calchas.—

PYLADES.

Ha!—can it be? — — thou never hast betray'd us—

ARCAS.

They might have torn my body, limb by limb,
These lips were clos'd for ever.

PYLADES.

What preserv'd thee?

ARCAS.

The visible arm and agency of heav'n.—

CALCHAS.

Hear, son of Strophius!

And, in still reverence bow before the Gods.

PYLADES.

Relate what pass'd.

ARCAS.

I stood before Ægisthus.
'Twas noontide: bright the sun, the monarch rode
In pomp of triumph. Then while loud his slaves
Shouted "Behold a God," from cloudless heav'n
Jove shot the lightning down, and all was still.

CALCHAS.

They knew not what it meant—I watch'd the bolt
That flash'd portentous, as the answ'ring spirit
Claim'd vengeance.

ARCAS.

Unappall'd, the tyrant rag'd:
Again the lightning struck, his steeds transfixt
Fell breathless. On his seat the monarch leapt
Upright: his rent robes flutter'd, and his hair
Stream'd loosely, sing'd with flame: but, in his eye
Pride glow'd, and indignation: and his brow

Uplifted, hurl'd defiance 'gainst the God.
He mock'd at heav'n, and earth: and, at the sight
Of me in chains, smil'd in contemptuous mood,
And bad me join the feast.

ATTENDANT *enters.*

Prophet! Ægisthus
Now summons thee.

CALCHAS.

Say, I attend. Go, thou— (*to* Arcas.)
Murderer! I will confront thee, and each word
Of prescient truth, to every ear, but thine,
Shall mark thy imminent death!

ELECTRA, *and* ORESTES *close veil'd, enter.*

PYLADES.

Electra here!
Why thus close veil'd? (*to* Orestes.) why this mysterious silence?

ELECTRA—(*to* Pylades.)
Speak to him. (*to* Orestes.) 'Tis thy friend—'tis Pylades.

ORESTES.

Bid him avoid me—say is Calchas here?

PYLADES.

Orestes! look upon me—

ORESTES.

Touch me not—

Away—unveil not this devoted head.

PYLADES.

Come to my arms.

ORESTES.

My touch conveys pollution—

PYLADES.

Whate'er thy doom, 'tis mine—

ORESTES—(*uncovering himself.*)

Let all avoid me:

This head is self-devoted to the Furies.

PYLADES.

What words are these? explain their awful meaning.

Wilt thou not speak?

ORESTES.

I dare a nameless deed:

And now fate summons to a conference,

That more than death appals me.

PYLADES.

Oh!

ORESTES.

Nay sigh not—

No pitying sigh, no sound of soothing voice

Must now be heard by me. Such sounds would melt me.

I have held conference with a form of night:

My powers, each sense, and living faculty,

My soul, and its affections, all are bound

To beings that inhabit other worlds:

To this estrang'd and dead—Calchas! prepare

The solemn rites—

CALCHAS.

Come.

ORESTES—*(going, turns back.)*

Pylades——Electra—

ELECTRA.

Oh brother!—brother!

PYLADES.

More than life belov'd!

ORESTES.

Friend! Sister! Oh I dare not say—farewel!

(Exit with Calchas.

PYLADES.

Selected minister of Jove! farewel!

ELECTRA.

Avenger of a murther'd sire! farewel!
He hears, and waves me back—I now may weep—
Thou, whom I look on with a sister's eye,
Oh think not harshly of me, that a woman
Excites to vengeance—bear with me, I pray—
My heart is overcharg'd, and I have never
Found friendly ear, wherein I dar'd to breathe,
The whisper of a woe—

PYLADES.

You see a brother—

ELECTRA.

Not nature, but dire wrongs have steel'd Electra.
Thou heard'st his words; each sense, and faculty,
His soul, and his affections (so he spake)
Were dead to earth, estrang'd from human kind.
And wherefore dead to earth? alas! his spirit
Had commun'd with th' unearthly—with whom then
Has lorn Electra commun'd? kindred beings?
Had I a mother? no—a murthress rear'd me.
What love? what cares? what counsel? what example:
Such as debase the soul, to vilest passions
Give brute excess: such as to name, shall never
Pollute my virgin lip.

PYLADES.

I pity thee—

ELECTRA.

No pity—spare me that—I am high soul'd—
How else had I existed? how sustain'd
While youth decay'd, year after year, to see
A base adulterer in Atrides' robes,

O'er me extend the sceptre of my race,
And when a tear gush'd forth, insult my woe?
Hear him revile my father's memory:
And, if I look'd but stern, bid Phrygian slaves
Chain my free hands? so have I liv'd for vengeance—
Dread, unexampled vengeance.

PYLADES.

Such dire wrongs
Pass human sufferance. Would I might assist thee!

ELECTRA.

Thou can'st assist me—thou like one from heav'n
Can'st soothe Electra.

PYLADES.

Can this dagger aid thee!

ELECTRA.

Brave youth! Orestes' arm is strongly nerv'd—
From thee I ask no act of blood, but one
Of unexampled kindness—

PYLADES.

Speak thy wish.

ELECTRA.

Hear then—Orestes nurst a woe in secret,
That prey'd upon his mind: from thee withheld,
Kindly withheld, lest it should shock thy nature:
Or, in th' unguarded transport of affection,
Bind thee in fellowship of woe with him
To nameless sufferings—

PYLADES.

Unkind Orestes!

ELECTRA.

The Oracle decreed—
E'en from the moment that he strikes the murthress,
Her persecuting Furies should pursue him,
'Till from the Tauric shrine he bring to Greece
One sacred to Diana—in his flight,
Mid the wild ravings of a mind distraught,
This too was told—"that one of all who live
"Alone should tend his woe."

PYLADES.

Jove here my vow!

That charge be mine!

ELECTRA.

Not if Electra live;

But, what the issue of this day of blood
Who who can tell? when danger calls Orestes
I shall not stand aloof—if there I perish
Remember thou thy oath—

PYLADES.

'Tis seal'd in heav'n.

ELECTRA.

Farewel heroic youth! live thou renown'd
The theme of future ages! at the name
Of Pylades, let friendship hail the sound,
And tears, like mine, from glowing transport gush—

(*Exeunt.*

SCENE changes to Clytemnestra's *apartment.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

(walking to and fro in apparent agitation.)

The stranger youth! he comes not! Phedra left him
Unmindful of the passing revellers

Lone in the outward court—she bad him enter,
Said, that I thrice had summon'd him: He groan'd,
And seem'd most loath to come!—why loth to come?
And whence these throbs portentous at my heart,
As if the soul unknowing what the woe
Gave presage of misfortune?—Ha! I hear
Their tread - - - they come - - - oh how they linger! sure
I catch their echoed voices - - - -

PHEDRA—(*behind the scenes.*)

Here—I pray thee

Enter—why turn away?

ORESTES—(*behind the scenes.*)

Oh horror! horror!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

(*rushing out, returns leading in* Orestes—Phedra *follows.*)

Here—here—why this reluctance? thou, keep watch,
Strict watch, that none approach: no curious ear
Lurk nigh this chamber—hence—(*Phedra goes*)—none
hear us now.
Why this repugnance, youth?

ORESTES.

Let me depart.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why dost thou tremble, stranger?

ORESTES.

Grief—deep grief
Breeds strange confusion. I would fain depart—

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(stopping him.)*

Stay youth, thou must not hence—thou fear'st, perhaps,
I shall regard thee with ungracious eye,
For that thy voice, to Clytemnestra, first
Spoke of Orestes' death.

ORESTES.

That, doubtless, that
To common minds were cause to cleave the heart,
Did not a mother hear those piercing words
"Thy Son is dead?"

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(reluctantly.)*

He would have murther'd me?

ORESTES.

A mother!—and a son!—oh horrible—

'Tis a sad strife for blood!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I slew him not.

ORESTES.

Not him—but—

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*highly agitated.*)

Stranger!

ORESTES.

Well—thy wish, thy wish—

What would'st thou with me?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I would win thy favour.

ORESTES.

Oh!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why that groan?

ORESTES.

We all have secret griefs—

Briefly disclose thy wish, and let me hence—
For I have that deep woe within my soul
That other's misery can claim no part.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Would I could sooth thy grief, as thou can'st mine!
To thee I must my inmost heart unbosom—
For tho' thy brow be stern, and strange thy look,
Youth is the time when sympathising pity
Most sways the yielding bosom—thou art young,
And misery, such as mine, will touch thy soul.—

ORESTES.

Oh! oh!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If thus thy groan, ere thou hast heard it,
Ah! what --- when utter'd—Youth! thou see'st before thee,
No queen resplendent in the pomp of pow'r,
Her high soul swelling o'er with boundless bliss.
The wretch, whose cry has never reach'd my ear,
The unfed beggar, shivering at my gate

Is far more blest than I!—He, at the close
Of each sad day, in rest of sleep, may find
Relief from woe: and revel in the dream
That lifts him o'er this world's unequal lot
To feast with Jove—my dream is of the dead - - -
Of spirits howling in eternal torture—
And when I rise,
'Tis from the bed of visionary horrors
To feel them real—pity, sooth, relieve me!
Fate has decreed that thou of all mankind
Alone can'st free me——

ORESTES.

- - - I! - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou know'st it well - - -

ORESTES.

I know it - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Turn not thus thy looks away—
Here look on me, and as my eye meets thine,
Give answer—

ORESTES.

Gaze not on me—I will answer—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Has not an oracle been heard by thee?

ORESTES.

'Tis certain.—I have heard prophetic sounds.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Calchas forewarn'd me—wilt thou not relieve me?
Thy heart is like thy brow: but I have gifts
That shall persuade assent.

ORESTES.

Gifts! - - - bribes - - - to me—
For this! - - -

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*in rage.*)

And, I have pow'r, unbounded pow'r,
That shall enforce compliance—

ORESTES—(*full of horror.*)

Force!——beware—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy pale cheek flashes with unwonted fire:

Again, resistless shudders shake thy frame.
Nay—fear not—let compassion touch thy heart!
Hear, innocent youth! thou know'st not what it is:
Thou hast no stain of blood upon thy soul.
Could'st thou conceive! --- no—none but murtherers can,
The tortures that await them!—I have felt them—
I have giv'n answer at the dead of night
To tongueless calls: my couch has been beset
With shapeless forms: the Furies of the slain
Have toss'd their torches round me, and their locks
Knotted with adders — — —

ORESTES.

Cease—my brain's on fire - - -
Oh spare me! spare me!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Meet me on - - - the spot - - -
Down from thy brow big drops in horror roll—

(Orestes *fixes his eyes on a dagger in the apartment.*)

Why are thine eyes fix'd on yon glittering scabbard?

ORESTES.

Spak'st thou not now of gifts?—give me that dagger,
And I will meet thee at the destin'd place.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I have rare gems and gold—those shall reward thee:
That steel is nothing worth—

ORESTES.

Give me that dagger—
I'll meet thee on the spot—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why strangely prize it?—

ORESTES.

What! is it strange that man to battle bred
Should value a man's weapon? one, perhaps
That grac'd 'mid wond'ring chiefs, Atrides' side.
Refuse it, death in tortures ne'er shall daunt me.

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(gives it.)*

Thou know'st not with what blade I arm thy hand.

ORESTES—*(full of horror.)*

There is no blood on thee, thou shining steel!
(aside, drawing the blade.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Swear thou wilt meet Ægisthus - - -

ORESTES—(*ardently interrupting her.*)

Aye—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And me,

At midnight - - - where - - -

ORESTES.

Nay, nay, I know it all—

In the blood-sprinkled bath.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By oath confirm it.—

ORESTES.

An oath too! - - - by my Father's memory!

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*gives him two keys.*)

Take these—this guards the passage—this, the bath—

Be there—and watch the tread of foot;—if mine,

This hand shall at the portal give the signal—

That heard, admit me.—

ORESTES.

I have sworn—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Farewel.

(*Exeunt.*

End of ACT 4th.

ACT V.

SCENE a Street before the Palace.

CALCHAS, PYLADES.

CALCHAS.

Obey—not mine the dictate—Jove there guides me.
Deem not that stern Ægisthus' summons mov'd me
To join the feast of murther.

PYLADES.

I obey.
Yet bid me not with tame forbearance hear

His insults, unaveng'd—oh! bid me plunge
This dagger in his heart, and there behold me
Stab the proud tyrant on his guarded throne.

CALCHAS.

Leave him to heav'n—fate, at the destin'd time
Will crush the impious.

PYLADES.

Seer, once more I urge thee,
May I not aid Orestes?—

CALCHAS.

Not this night—
The time shall come, when Pylades alone
Shall aid, alone shall sooth his frantic woe.

(*as they are going out they meet* Electra.

ELECTRA.

Say, hast thou seen Orestes? I, in vain
Have search'd the palace round.—

CALCHAS.

He pass'd not here—

PYLADES.

How hast thou scap'd unnotic'd?

ELECTRA.

None keep watch—

The guards are steep'd in riotous excess.

Oh were not force forbidden! we ourselves,

Few as we are, might boldly dare the deed,

And master these brute revellers.

CALCHAS—(*to* Electra.)

Go Electra,

And if thou find Orestes, I enjoin thee,

Not unattended let him seek the bath.

I dread his troubled spirit.—

ELECTRA.

Guide me, Jove!

Thanks holy Prophet——

(Exit.

CALCHAS—(*to* Pylades.)

To the banquet, come!

(Exeunt.

SCENE changes to a lone and gloomy Court.

ORESTES.

This is fit place! no voice is heard—no tread
Breaks on this noiseless gloom - - - I saw the sun
Go calmly down—Yet—once—('tis said) the God
Turn'd back with horror from Thyestes' feast.
Of kindred blood, I dare a kindred deed—
Let me not dwell on't. 'Tis not yet the hour.
Yon clouds, that gather o'er me, thickly veil
All that has form and hue in deepest gloom!
Man sees not Man. The outward beam is dim—
Yet, ah! more clearly the internal light
Glares on the thought close-shrouded in the soul.
I hear a step.

ELECTRA *enters.*

Orestes! oh where art thou?

ORESTES.

It is her voice! - - -

ELECTRA.

Who speaks?—Orestes! answer—

ORESTES.

I would this had not been!

ELECTRA.

'Tis he - - - my brother.

ORESTES.

I look'd not for this meeting. My intent
Is fixt—I shun all human intercourse.
Depart—I pray—

ELECTRA.

If 'tis thy wish—I go——
But - - - thus to part in fearful ignorance! - - -

ORESTES.

Thou wilt not then with woman's pity melt me?—

ELECTRA.

Fix on thy heart thy hand, and count its beats,
Then question mine—our aim, our souls are one—
I will not vex thee with vain strife of words,
Turning thy spirit from its great intent:

But if thou hold my blood allied to thine,

Confide in me——-

ORESTES—(*shewing the dagger.*)

I have the dagger—here——

ELECTRA.

Enough——

ORESTES.

And I have vow'd - - -

ELECTRA.

What vow? - - -

ORESTES.

At midnight

To meet her at the bath—

ELECTRA.

Th' adulterer with her?

ORESTES.

He shall not 'scape—'tis likewise fix'd, that I

Go, ere the hour—these (*the keys*) give me entrance—then

At signal, I admit them—

ELECTRA.

So far, well!—

But - - -

ORESTES.

Why this pause?

ELECTRA.

Thou goest not there alone—

ORESTES.

I want no aid—oh be my heart but firm
This arm dreads no resistance.

ELECTRA.

None shall aid thee.

The son of Agamemnon shall alone
Claim, vindicate, and wear his father's honors—
But the dread deed is destin'd in the place
Where bled thy father - - - at the hour he fell—

ORESTES.

I know it—aye, and justly so ordain'd——

ELECTRA.

There thou must lonely wait th' appointed time.

ORESTES.

Well——

ELECTRA.

How shall pass the dreary interval?
No light has glanc'd on that accursed spot.
Since there he bled—

ORESTES.

A lamp dispels the gloom—

ELECTRA.

To witness what? the robe which shrouded him,
Thrice rent, where each deep stroke did pierce his heart.
Thou wilt have leisure time: for what? to gaze on
The brazen bath crusted with unwash'd stains:
To count the drops of blood that spot the floor:
And gather, one by one, wherever scatter'd,
Each hair, with blood distain'd, rent from his head
In the last struggle when he gasp'd for breath.

ORESTES.

Thou shak'st my soul.

ELECTRA.

And thou wilt hear his groan
As the adulteress smote him: and his moan
That feebly murmur'd "mercy," when she seiz'd him,
So that he stirr'd not underneath the hand—
These, and lone brooding o'er the vengeful blow
May, haply, none, none near thee - - - -

ORESTES—*(seizing her arm.)*

Cease! Electra,
Come! let us go together—

ELECTRA.

Thus, Orestes,
Thus join'd, all, all will prosper.

ORESTES.

Be thou present!
Shade of my father! rise! and claim revenge—

Exeunt.

SCENE—The Palace.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* PHEDRA.

PHEDRA.

Loud rung their mirth—before I reach'd the hall
The tumult met my ear: I scarce could pass
The press of guests that round Ægisthus clamor'd.
I spake thy words, and much I wonder, Queen!
That thus he lingers—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Few are found, who quit
With willing speed, the feast and crouded banquet
At misery's call. And yet, methinks, Ægisthus
Had hasten'd when I urg'd. You spake my words!

PHEDRA.

When I drew near him, his bow'd head hung o'er
A heavy goblet charg'd with wine. I rous'd him,
And thrice repeated what thou spak'st—he heard,
And gave (forgive the utterance) slow assent—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Reluctantly comply'd!—you misconceiv'd—

You importun'd him rudely at the banquet—
He comes—it is himself—leave us—(*exit as* Ægisthus *enters*)
Ægisthus!
Why this delay? know, I have lonely groan'd
In restless expectation.

ÆGISTHUS.

Clytemnestra
Thou should'st have join'd our revels—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What! to smile
On flattering fools, regardless of my doom,
When boding visitations summon me
To fate's uncertain issue? thou hast heard
The supernatural vision ----

ÆGISTHUS.

Woman's fears!—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Light-hearted man! when Clytemnestra shakes
No brood of idle fancy floats before her—
The shape I saw was palpable as thine.

Laugh with thy slaves—to me give serious heed.
The banquet and the bowl awhile forget:
I claim that strict observance which the cause
Imperiously demands—

ÆGISTHUS.

Speak—I attend—(*a laugh and festal shout are heard.*)
Heard'st thou that shout? I would the shape that scar'd thee
Might dare confront our feasters—

CLYTEMNESTRA—(*with highest indignation.*)

'Twas - - - - Atrides—(*Ægisthus starts back.*)
Aye—start—the grapes thick fumes o'ercloud thy brain.
But I will rouse thee to thy native terror.
When answering torches on from Mount to Mount,
From Ida's crest to Argos, spake that Troy
Was levell'd, and the lord of Greece, the conqueror,
The son of Atreus, Agamemnon, sped
In triumph to his realm: Who then preserv'd thee?

ÆGISTHUS.

Forbear—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

In prostrate guise, thou call'd'st on me.
I struck the warrior low. Thou stood'st aloof—
I sav'd, I wedded, I first hail'd thee, King—

ÆGISTHUS.

Forbear—I will obey thee—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Mark at least,
Not mine the wreck of peace, of fame, of virtue,
For base ingratitude—be what thou wilt
But not ungrateful.

ÆGISTHUS.

How can I assist thee?
Thy will is mine.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thus—'tis decreed above,
That from the youth, who bore Orestes' urn,

I claim deliverance from these madd'ning horrors.
The mystery of fate is known to him.
And ere two hours are past, the time is mark'd,
At midnight - - - in the Bath - - - where fell Atrides,
I meet the youth: thou too must join my steps—
Delay not when I call.

ÆGISTHUS.

I now am ready.
Let us prevent his step.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast thou no fear?

ÆGISTHUS.

The place I fear not: nor that beardless youth—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou hast no weapon with thee—this at least
Were prudent, to go arm'd—

ÆGISTHUS.

Give me thy dagger.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The youth requested it.—

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou - - - trust that dagger
To one scarce known to thee! well - - - 'tis the hand
That gives the steel its worth—I will go arm'd—
Fear not—I will protect thee—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou protect me!
Oh be but with me! go—and if thou feast,
Avoid excess - - - be ready at the summons.

(*Exeunt.*

SCENE changes to a magnificent banqueting-room, thronged with guests, and sumptuously decorated. Musicians, Singers, &c. &c.

PHANOR—*Guests.*

PHANOR.

'Tis but a transient absence—on his brow
Low'rd discontent—the king was loath to leave us.
Our mirth shall chase his gloom. On his return,
Swift at his entrance, wake the lyre and flute,
And raise the festive chorus—Lo! he comes.

ÆGISTHUS *enters.*

(*instruments and voices strike up saluting him.*)

PHANOR.

Hail monarch! - - - hail! - - - (*choral song.*)

ÆGISTHUS.

- - - I greet you all—most welcome—
The intervening moments, which, like clouds
Crossing the sun, broke rudely on our mirth,
By shew of grateful contrast, give new zest
And relish to enjoyment - - - Welcome all.—

PHANOR.

Monarch of Argos! hail!

ÆGISTHUS.

This fits th' occasion—
My spirits, with redoubled ardor, rush
To swell your transport—fill again the bowl.
That strain once more— (*chorus is repeated.*)
Fling wide the palace gates—the wond'ring strangers
Shall gaze on our magnificence—say, Phanor,
Where is the Prophet?—him I bade attend;

His oft-repeated threat will raise our mirth—
Looks this like heav'n's displeasure? Where the strangers
That met us in our triumph?—

PHANOR.

—They attend.
We but delay'd, Ægisthus, 'till thy nod
Gave sign of entrance.———

ÆGISTHUS.

Let them now advance—

Enter PYLADES *and* ARCAS.

PHANOR.

Make way, make way.

PYLADES.

I pray thee, leave us here - - -

ÆGISTHUS.

Who speaks? - - -

PHANOR.

The stranger Phocians - - -

ÆGISTHUS.

Forward lead them.

Look! how they gaze, in speechless wonder lost.

PHANOR.

The gorgeous majesty of Argos, dazzles

The unaccustom'd eye - - -

ÆGISTHUS.

Your Phocian feasts

Are poor to these?

PYLADES.

No——our's—are holy banquets

Whereon the Gods look down—not feasts of blood.

PHANOR.

Lo! Calchas comes - - -

(*as the Prophet slowly advances, the scene gradually darkens.*)

ÆGISTHUS.

Where is the hoary Prophet?

PHANOR.

What strange obscurity o'erclouds the banquet?

ÆGISTHUS.

I scarce can see his face!—give me thy torch—

Why dost thou gaze so fixedly upon me? (*to* Calchas.)

CALCHAS.

The tears gush down thy cheek!—thou see'st them not—
Thy groans—ill-fated wretch! thou hear'st them not—

ÆGISTHUS.

Are these thy wonted threat'nings?

CALCHAS.

---I speak none—
Dread what the heav'ns denounce!

(*violent thunder and lightning.*)

PHANOR.

The arch'd vault shakes!

ÆGISTHUS.

Methinks I sit like Jove enthron'd 'mid Gods,
While lightnings sport beneath me!—

(*the guests disperse in much confusion.*)

CALCHAS.

Impious wretch!

PHANOR.

How shall we 'scape? the roof is cop'd with flames.

Round every column streams the lightning's blaze.

ÆGISTHUS.

(flinging away the bowl, which he had lifted to his lips.)

Fill me another bowl—This tastes of blood - - -

(pours out a mock libation.)

This is our wonted offering to the shade

Of slain Atrides - - -

(*the voice that spoke at the tomb is heard.*)

" Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!"

ATTENDANT *on Clytemnestra enters.*

King! Clytemnestra calls—

ÆGISTHUS.

I haste—

CALCHAS.

To death— (*Exeunt.*

SCENE the vaults leading to the bath.

ORESTES *and* ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

I am prepar'd for all—take thou the lamp.

So: hold the light. These locks by time encrusted
Will not give way.

(*his hand trembles, that he cannot rightly direct the key.*)

ELECTRA.

It is thy hand that trembles.
Give me the key. The springs resist not—now

(*the door opens.*)

Force back the iron grate—why dost thou start?
This way—thy hand, Orestes—follow me—

ORESTES.

'Tis loathsome as the charnel-house.

(*he lingers, and turns away.*)

ELECTRA.

Quick, quick,
Hasten thy step—heed not—'twill pass away—

ORESTES.

The damps imprison'd in this unsun'd vault
Strike me with death-like chill—hold up the light—
'Tis midnight darkness—

ELECTRA.

Come.

ORESTES.

Thy single lamp

Scarce shoots a glimmering ray athwart the gloom.

ELECTRA.

Oh do not wish for more!

ORESTES.

I understand thee - - -

I shall not see her when I lift my arm—

I would not see her face—

ELECTRA.

Banish these thoughts—

ORESTES—(*in the utmost horror.*)

Oh sister! if her eye should glance on mine!

(*in passing on, he strikes his foot against the brazen bath.*)

What's this, which as I struck it unawares

Did loudly ring, and vibrate 'gainst my foot?—

ELECTRA.

Oh ask not! pass this way—

ORESTES.

Ah! 'tis the bath

In which he perish'd! quick, take back the light—

ELECTRA.

This way—here wait, shrouded in thickest gloom—

ORESTES—*(starting forward in extreme agitation.)*

Hah! seest thou not?

ELECTRA.

What moves there?

ORESTES.

'Mid the darkness

There, there, it dimly gleams—unclasp my hand—

ELECTRA—*(vainly attempting to hold him.)*

Why dost thou struggle from me!

ORESTES.

'Tis the robe - - - *(seizes it.)*

ELECTRA.

Keep firm his brain, oh Phœbus!—

ORESTES—(*displaying the robe to the light.*)

Heav'n and Earth!

Thrice pierc'd!—and where the accursed dagger smote him,
Each rent blood-stain'd, yet marks the blow of hell—
Die murth'ress! (*quite frantic*) call me not "thy Son, thy Son."
Clasp not my hand!—bare not thy breast to me—
Die murthress! lo! she falls—this hand has stab'd her.
Ha! what are ye, that from each drop of blood
Start into life? foul hags! your blazing locks
Are viper-knotted. Why thus strain tow'rds me
Your balls roll'd in blood? ye shall not grasp me—
Stretch all your wings—I fly before the wind.—(*He falls exhausted.*)

ELECTRA.

My brother!—(*endeavouring to hold him in his struggles.*)

ORESTES.

Hah!

ELECTRA.

Know'st thou not me?

ORESTES.

I know thee—

Thou art my mother's Fury—thou hast seiz'd me
To whirl me into Tartarus—(*violently struggling*)—off, off,
Down to the realms of torture—

ELECTRA.

Oh my brother!

ORESTES—(*recovering.*)

Electra!

ELECTRA.

Lov'd Orestes! oh my brother!

ORESTES.

Thou!

ELECTRA.

'Tis thy sister clasps thee in her arms.
These are Electra's tears that wet thy cheek.

ORESTES.

Clasp me—nay closer—are they fled away?

ELECTRA.

'Twas but the coinage of thy brain—

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ORESTES.

Indeed—

(a noise of approaching steps.)

I hear the tread of feet—they come—they come—

ÆGISTHUS—(*is heard behind the scenes.*)

Where is the youth that brought Orestes' urn?

Give entrance to Ægisthus—

ORESTES.

'Tis th' Adulterer—

I am myself again—King! enter in—(*opens the door.*)

ÆGISTHUS—(*in entering.*)

Go slaves! bid Clytemnestra haste—away—

ORESTES—*to* Electra, *as* Ægisthus *enters.*

This is a righteous blow! hold up the lamp,

That we may view each other, face to face.

ÆGISTHUS—*enters.*

Boy! drop that lifted dagger, or thou diest—

(*drawing his sword.*)

ORESTES—*(stabs him.)*

'Tis I, Orestes, Agamemnon's son

Who smite thee to the heart——*(he falls groaning.)*

ELECTRA.

So fall the base,

Th' adulterer, and oppressor!—hark! I hear

A hasty foot—art thou prepar'd?

ORESTES.

Oh heav'n!

Quick, close that gate. Cast o'er this wretch the robe:

Yet faint his groan. So veil, that sight, nor sound

Give warning to her ere I strike the blow—

I would not shock her soul before the time:

Enough that this must be—

ELECTRA.

Is there ought else?

ORESTES.

Put out thy light—(*she extinguishes it*)—the lamp too which she bears,

On sudden, with swift hand, extinguish it.

If but a ray break forth, this dagger drops.

CLYTEMNESTRA—*(knocks thrice.)*

'Tis I, 'tis Clytemnestra, give me entrance—

ORESTES.

Quick, quick, unbar the portal—

(at her entrance, Electra *dashes out her lamp.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What rude hand

Has seiz'd the lamp? where art thou stranger? speak—

Ægisthus?

ÆGISTHUS.

Oh—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A death-groan strikes my ear—

What's this which bars my way? it is the robe

Which tangled him—there's one that stirs beneath:

And blood, warm blood, spouts thro' the heaving folds—

ÆGISTHUS—*(faintly.)*

Fly—I am slain—Orestes' dagger pierc'd me—

He is the stranger—fly. *(he dies.)*

(as she attempts to fly, Orestes *seizes her with one hand, with the other holds the dagger over her.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What chill hand grasps me?

ORESTES.

Thou must not live——

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Spare me—my Son! my Son!

Strike not this breast that nurtur'd thee!. have pity!—

My Son! my Son! have pity on thy mother—

ORESTES—*(turns his face away.)*

I cannot wound her—

(the voice that spoke at the tomb.)

"Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!"

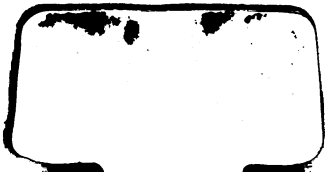
CLYTEMNESTRA—(*shrieks.*)

Oh! 'tis Atrides' voice—there is no hope——

Thus—thus—my arm shall aid thy lingering blow.

(seizes his arm, and rushes on the dagger.)

(*The curtain falls.*)

FINIS.

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